

THE HEART OF  
MYRRHA LAKE.



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THE

# HEART OF MYRRHA LAKE;

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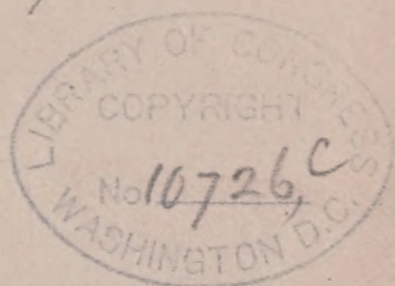
Into the Light of Catholicity.

BY

MINNIE MARY LEE.

*send?*

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Wm W. H. Wood.



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# THE HEART OF MYRRHA LAKE;

OR,

## INTO THE LIGHT OF CATHOLICITY.



MYRRHA LAKE'S LETTER TO STELLA VAUGHAN.

OU are much surprised, my friend, at the step I am about to take. You express much wonder that I, born and bred among the mountains of New Hampshire, in an atmosphere essentially Puritan, should ever have come to entertain my present views. You cannot understand how it has happened that one so "sensible," so "intelligent," educated at Science Hill, should have unhappily submitted to the degradation of counting beads and repeating Ave Marias. Because a person physically blind sees neither light, form, nor color, shall he, therefore, insist that there is no glory of the sun, no gracefulness of the flower? that there is no beauty in the rainbow, no comeliness in nature? You will say, What do you mean? for I am not blind, either physically or mentally.

Again, then: if the blind man, through the skill



of the physician, has recovered his sight, will he not cry aloud for joy in the new light which is flooding everything with beauty? Shall his brother, still blind, having made use of no remedy, disdainfully address him: "Cease your exultation. The world will laugh at your folly; for does it not know that you were born blind? You labor under a delusion—you have gone mad. Were we not alike? How, then, does it happen that you can see while I see not, except that I perceive the foolishness of your whim?" Shall the new joy of the newly-awakened be hushed by this reproach? It is saddened only by the thought that, whereas his brother might see, yet he will not.

I could not, as you desire, sit down and tell you everything in an hour, or two hours, or three.

There are many, aside from persons of distinction, who keep a diary. For instance, you do and I do. While you have been jotting down notes of foreign travel, soliloquizing over grandeurs, glories, and ruins of nature and art, I have been inditing the simple events of a quiet home, giving record to the natural reflections, dreams, and speculations of a country young lady of eighteen.

About midway of my Volume IV. commences a narration of those circumstances which led to the great, happy change of my life. Simple and natural though they appear, I love to trace in them the "hidden ways of God," who, by his own peculiar grace and favor, has called me from comparative "darkness into his marvellous light."



From this diary I shall make for you such quotations as bear upon the subject of my conversion. There will be necessarily repetitions, reiterated weaknesses ; in short, an exhibition of the doubts and struggles of a soul being attracted, almost against its will, into realms to itself unknown. Portions of these I shall abridge or omit.

You have known of my long engagement to Selwyn Everett. Of course, the leaves of my diary are covered thickly with his name. I rarely introduced it, however, even with the rudiments of the new religion. I kept him separate and apart, I know not why. Therefore, you will scarcely find mention of him until he comes really upon the scene ; the sacrifice, like the son of the patriarch of old—the test of the soul—whether or not its faith were perfect unto God. Were you a Catholic, I might beg your leniency. My comprehension of the new doctrines was often imperfect, my reasoning impulsive perhaps, but in all, my most earnest desire was to find the truth.

As to the kind priest who instructed us at the last, I would be doing him an injustice did I profess to give in writing his exact words. I naturally sought to represent his ideas : to reproduce his words would have been impossible. It is, then, for you rightly to infer that words, if not ideas, suffer from my short-hand.

Stella, friend of my girlhood, while you read these fragments of my diary, should you feel disposed still to pity my delusion, recall for me your former regard.




You had confidence in my judgment, in my sincerity. You did not regard me as eccentric nor disposed to hallucinations of any kind. Do not, then, believe me changed in this respect, but pause and question if there be not indeed God's unfailing truth in this new faith which I have taken joyfully to my soul. I reap no worldly advantage; the pleasures of the world have no longer for me a charm. It has broken the one dream of my life, it has plucked out my right eye, it has cut off my right hand, yet thanks be to God who hath given me the victory!

If still disposed to marvel and to pity, recall the words of our Divine Master: "Yet one thing thou lackest: sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and take up thy cross, and follow me." "And how dost thou seek another way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy cross?" Who is it that thus calls us, thus takes us captive, thus bids us kneel to the cross? It is not man, but God! That you may follow him, bearing the cross; that you may win him, wearing the crown, is the prayer of Myrrha Lake.



I.

ATHERINE proves a treasure. She is so prudent, gentle, efficient. Her quiet step, mild voice, unbustling ways, are such a contrast to the noisy, rough, rude Hannah. It was surely a Providence that took her away and that sent us this good Catherine. The effect upon mamma is magical. Under Hannah's reign she was excited, almost sleepless. The quiet of Catherine is like an opiate. It soothes her mentally and physically. She stands by her for hours bathing her head and her closed, suffering eyes, or smoothing her wavy brown hair with her gentle palm. Mamma and I are delighted. We have hopes now that her eyes will improve.

— I have made a discovery. Our wonderful Catherine is a Catholic—a Roman Catholic! I was never more surprised. Last evening, after having bade mamma good-night, I went back to her room for something. It was already late; for Catherine, who has some time been maid to a travelling invalid in Ireland, had been telling us stories and legends of the Emerald Isle. In the midst, mamma, who is already better, fell asleep. Catherine sleeps on a lounge near her, and awakens at her first call. What a difference! Hannah might have been one of the Seven Sleepers.



As I returned noiselessly to the room, though the lamp was turned low, I could see Catherine on her knees, with a little cross of ivory before her, a string of beads in her hand. I stood motionless regarding her. Her attitude and manner were those of the utmost devotion. Her whispered petitions were audible in the silence, and I distinctly caught "Our Lord's Prayer," though she omitted the sublime close. I did not at once take in the truth until I caught the name of Mary. I have been told from my very childhood that the Roman Catholics are worshippers of Mary; that they bow down to her image, and to the pictures and images of the saints, to the exclusion of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Here, in the heart of New England, few of us have seen an idolater of this kind. A returned missionary from Burmah exhibited, not long ago, at the Sunday-school, some little images which the heathens worship. At the same time he said it was to similar images that the deluded adherents to Romanism bowed down and worshipped.

I have not forgotten *Fox's Martyrs*, nor *English History*, nor *The Spanish Inquisition*. I shiver to think, this moment, of the crimes of Bloody Mary, the persecutions of the poor Huguenots, St. Bartholomew's Eve—alas! what a record of crime to be associated with the word—church! And now, here in our very midst, is one of these dreadful people, and, stranger still, in the person of our good Catherine!

I stood motionless, watching her till she had



done all her beads, though her slender fingers slipped around from one to another very slowly, I thought. There were still other prayers to be said, for she remained kneeling, with folded hands, and eyes fastened on the little cross before her. When all was finished, she made upon herself the sign of the cross, and as she arose to her feet I stole away.

I went to my room, but not to sleep. When I knelt to say my customary brief prayer, I felt bewildered. There came upon me a strong conviction that my prayer would never reach God's throne. I was sure the incense was wanting—what else shall I call it?—the fervor, the faith, the entire absence of self, which characterized the devotions of the humble servant of our house. On my knees I reflected as I never before had done; the result was that I felt myself to lack something, as if I had lost and could not find.

I suppose I am not a Christian really. My father, a Congregational clergyman, who died before my remembrance, baptized me in infancy. I have been taught to pray every night, and to attend meeting every Sunday when convenient. Further than this, I am in a state of waiting—waiting for the call to become a Christian, which I shall surely receive and accept if I am foreordained to be one of God's elect—a change of heart, given instantaneously by the Holy Ghost. Will it ever be given me?

— Another whole day, my principal thoughts have been hovering about Catherine's prayers. Strange I should be so exercised, simply from wit-



nessing the devotions of an ordinary child of the Catholic Church! I have somewhere read that many of the people in that church are sincere; that the priests and bishops, who are very learned, and know better, purposely keep them in ignorance, lest they should understand and rebel; that they teach these poor deluded beings to be deceitful, and to believe that any means are lawful to bring about a desired end.

Uncle Abner White, who visited us from Charlestown last summer, saw the burning of the Ursuline Convent many years ago, which was set on fire by an indignant mob. He thought it was a good, glorious deed; it was doing God service; it was destroying the kingdom of Satan in their midst. He told dreadful things of the Catholics—how servant-girls were made to poison whole families of Protestants, on the principle that they were heretics, enemies of God, and that it was no sin to destroy them. I can believe Uncle Abner. Though he is quite uneducated, yet he is a good man, a devoted Methodist. And now to think Catherine belongs to such a people! How do I know but she will poison us, notwithstanding her saintly ways? I am not afraid of it. I could not see clearer into the heart of another than I saw into that of Catherine, through her illuminated face and eyes, when she held discourse with God, unmindful of the presence of another. I feel sure that she is a Christian; but, oh! how I wish she were not a Catholic! Perhaps she has



never been taught any other way. Probably she does not know how very wicked it is to worship Mary, who was but a mere woman ; or how foolish it is to call upon saints, who can have no shadow of an ear for mortal words. I wonder if mamma could not have some influence over her.

— Day after day passes, and I dare not tell mamma what I know would shock her. Catherine is such a comfort to her, so attentive, constant, kind. I so greatly fear she would turn her away. I feel as though this would be unjust, unreasonable. Something, I know not what, attracts me wonderfully to this idolater. I cannot bear to think of her going from us, at least until she has learned to practise her devotions in our more simple way. But, then, our way is so very simple, there is not much practice about it.

I wonder what it means to pray with beads? I have been on the point of asking Catherine ; or, at least, of letting her know that I have discovered her secret, but I do not know how to begin. I expect mamma ought to know, but I have hardly the courage to tell her ; her eyes are far from well, and I feel pretty sure it would distress her to know she was attended by a *subject of the Pope*. If she was where the Pope is, Catherine I mean, I suppose she would kneel and kiss his toe, which similar performance was represented by a picture in my geography. Of what folly may not ignorance be guilty ! But what a weight of responsibility and sin must rest upon the heads of the wicked, crafty



priests! What can be their object—what do they gain by it? I wonder if they get rich, and live in fine houses, and ride in fine carriages; it must be, or they would not stoop so low as to delude the poor and ignorant. They make great shows and parades. I remember having read about their great doings in Rome, where the Pope is borne about on the shoulders of men, and he is saluted as if he were God himself. And the cardinals, dressed in scarlet, satins, and velvets, with ornaments, fringes, and tassels of gold, and hats which sparkle with precious stones—how unlike Jesus and his humble fishermen!

—— I have just come from Catherine's room. Passing through the hall, I noticed her door ajar. Thinking she might be within, I rapped lightly. Hearing no movement, I pushed open the door and entered. Unlike most of servants, she keeps her room in perfect tidiness, as she does her person. I stopped suddenly, as if I had no right to intrude. Glancing around, my eye caught an unusual arrangement of the little table at the head of her bed. It was covered with a white linen cloth, on which rested, upon a little pedestal, the ivory crucifix I had before seen. Back of this, leaning against the wall, were pictures in frames of the Virgin and Child, of the Crucifixion, and of the Holy Family. Beneath the mirror, which was suspended above, hung the beads with which Catherine seemed to have been assisted in her prayers when I became an involuntary witness. Wrapped in white napkins are a beautiful



prayer-book and a handsomely bound volume entitled *Following of Christ*. A well-worn catechism and a dingy *Lives of the Early Martyrs* complete the adornments of that attractive little table.

I was so curious to look into the prayer-book that I must have sat a full hour on the floor glancing it over. It is beautiful, it is sublime, that is, the most of it. There is what is called "Litany of the Blessed Virgin," which strikes me as unnecessary; and yet I could not help thinking, when I read the quotation prefacing it, "Behold! all generations shall call me blessed," that I have never heard her called blessed yet, nor ever think of her with any more devotion or feeling than of Elizabeth, Anna, or any other woman of the Bible. But, clearly, it must be a monstrous wrong to worship Mary as Catholics do, and I should like to know where they pretend to get their authority from. Though I suppose they do not go on authority; for have not I read—yes, indeed—that they, the priests, never allow one of their people to read the Bible, that they burn every Bible they find, because the good Book and their religion do not agree? How can that be; and they have such beautiful prayers in their books as lift you right off your feet almost! But then I suppose they get so used to them that they become an old story; so that they repeat them over and over without thought or heart. No doubt our way is much the best, and God hears all prayers that come really from the heart; but those words keep ringing in my ears—a new, grand melody.



— I had quite made up my mind to continue the reading of Catherine's books, though still undecided whether to communicate with her on the subject. But when I entered softly her room, I felt so much like a thief that I instantly withdrew, and sought her in mamma's room. Calling her aside, I said :

"Catherine, are you willing for me to read in those books that you have lying upon your table in your room?"

"Certainly, Miss Myrrha, and you are more than welcome," her face brightening, as if I had been the one to do her the favor. I continued :

"You see, Catherine, I have discovered what is your religion. But you need not be alarmed. I have not told mamma yet, and, as for myself, I think just as much of you as if you were like us."

"Had you asked me, I would have told you. I am never ashamed of my religion." And Catherine's face turned crimson, evidently from enthusiasm, not from shame.

"No, of course not; you were brought up in it; you do not know any other."

"Any other? No; I do not see how there can be but one religion. Only one Saviour has died for sinners."

"But then, you know, all people cannot think alike, nor believe alike."

"Not on other things, perhaps, but they should all have faith in our blessed Lord."

"Well, they do, I suppose; but what I mean is,



there have to be different churches to suit different people."

"I don't understand why. Our Lord taught one doctrine. You will find in my catechism, 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism,' and it is taken from the Holy Scriptures. Also, you will find where it says 'One fold—one Shepherd.'"

"And fold means church, doesn't it—yes, I've read that in my Bible, but I did not stop to think about it. When you have plenty of time, Catherine, I wish you would tell me somewhat about your religion."

"Dear Miss Myrrha, I would like to do so, but I cannot. You need some one wiser than myself. But I can tell you what I do know in my simple way. If you will read my catechism, *that* will tell you all you need to know."

"Will it? Oh! well, then. I will not detain you standing here any longer. Thank you."

Catherine warmly pressed my hand, and turned away with tears in her eyes. I wonder why? Returning hastily to her room, I took the catechism, somewhat ragged and soiled, and sat down on a low seat by the window. I felt, in some strange way, that I should get a better understanding of it if I read it in its own place of abode, wherein stood the crucifix, and wherein I supposed Catherine usually said her prayers, than if I carried it to my own room. I sat there, quite absorbed, from morning until noon, when I had finished it. Had it been a sensational novel, I could not have read it more intently. I paused to meditate



at some passages. The catechism expressly states that therein are contained all the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Now, my idea of that church has always been that its most prominent features were the worship of images, of the Blessed Virgin and the saints, and that its members might commit all kinds of sins, no matter how many or how grievous, with the full belief that by paying a certain sum of money to the priest, and confessing all these sins, they received pardon of God, and were at liberty to go away, again to commit the same transgressions. This little book, which professes to contain "all Christian doctrine," and which is the *vade mecum* of humble Catholics like Catherine, teaches nothing of the kind. Mary is to be prayed to and venerated, as an exalted creature, and an intercessor before God—not worshipped as a goddess. The same of the saints. There is a vast difference. Even this, however, presupposes a belief that they hear one's prayers. This is not at all probable, nor authorized by the Bible. Then, Mary is called "Mother of God," which, at first, struck me as blasphemous. And it still strikes me thus. "Mother of God"! Then is she not to be indeed worshipped by every living creature? I never knew before what was the *Ave Maria* that we read so much of. The *Ave Maria* seems ever to follow the *Pater Noster*. There can be no harm in repeating the first portion of the Hail Mary, as it is from the Bible itself. And the last part, which is said to have been added by the church—"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now



and at the hour of our death"—would be quite comforting as a petition if we only knew that she could hear us. Because, if we have faith in prayer, and believe in the assurance that "the prayer of the righteous man availeth much," we must believe that the prayers of one so favored as the Mother of Christ—

*Mother of Christ!* And is not Christ God?—the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity. Did not Christ say, "I and my Father are one"? Is there such a power in habit? We say calmly, "Mary, Mother of Christ." We are startled at, "Mary, Mother of God." But if we deny to her this title, it seems to me that we deny that Christ is equal to the Father—nay, that we deny the doctrine of the Trinity itself. It is doubtless clearer to wiser heads than mine—and should be verily; a girl of eighteen is no fit theologian.

I have re-read in the catechism the chapter on "Prayer." I there find, "The saints and angels hear us," since "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth"—"doing penance" it is there. I wonder what is the difference? It really would seem from that, that they may be endowed with the gift of hearing earthly voices. I know nothing about it—absolutely nothing. I wish I did. Ah! I am so weary and confused. I will turn to the catechism, and commit to memory some of those beautiful prayers—the Acts of Contrition, Faith, Hope, and Love. As I read them, they seem to carry me near to God, or to bring God nearer to me.



## II.



WHEN I took up that small book of Catherine's called *A General Catechism of the Christian Doctrine*, I little dreamed upon what a study I had entered. Again, after reading it through, I as little dreamed upon what a sea of speculation I had launched. I become thoroughly perplexed and lost in its teachings. I turn from it to the prayer-book; and now and then I read a chapter in the *Following of Christ*, which seems to me an epitome of piety. But I am obliged to go back to the knotty questions of this one little, frail, tattered pamphlet. I have endeavored to distract my thoughts by diving into the pages of Dickens and Scott. These favorite authors have ceased to charm me. If only I had the courage to speak to my dear mother! She had a dear friend sitting with her for a time yesterday. I took that occasion to call Catherine to my room. I was ashamed for her to know to what an extent my curiosity—I know not what otherwise to term it—in examining into her religion had reached. Therefore, I assumed an indifference which I was far from feeling.

“Well, Catherine,” I said, “I have been reading your books, more especially this little forlorn-looking wayfarer. Some of it I can make out and



understand, the rest is unintelligible. Do you believe it all, Catherine?"

"Yes, Miss Myrrha, I believe it."

"Why do you believe it?"

"Because it contains the doctrines of the church."

"Exactly; but why do you believe the doctrines of the church?"

"Because we are commanded to hear the church, which is the pillar and the ground of truth."

"Oh! yes, I observed that command in the catechism, which was accompanied by a reference to the chapter and verse in the Bible from which it was quoted. I looked for the reference because I did not remember ever to have read it or to have heard it quoted. But I found it, word for word. From that might be signified that there should be really but one church—that there *was* but one church."

"And just above in the catechism, 'He that will not hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican.' That, too, is from one of the Gospels," said Catherine.

"The church—always *the* church," I resumed. "Perhaps it means in whatever church one may be, one is to obey *that* church."

"I don't know," persisted Catherine, "about any church but the church that our blessed Lord founded and taught."

"That is all one need to know, if only one could find out which that one is."



Catherine at once jumped upon Peter's Rock.

"You know, Miss Myrrha, that our blessed Lord said to Peter: "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

"I remember. But it seems no one church has stood."

"O Miss Myrrha! do you know what you say? Did our blessed Saviour speak truth or did he not? If he spoke truth, the church stands to-day. If he did not, he was an impostor and not God. I have heard Father Burke say that more than once."

"Catherine, do you feel very sure that you are in the right church—just as sure as that you are sitting in that chair before me now?"

"Just as sure, ma'am, just as sure. We are poor, blind human beings. Does it look reasonable that our Lord, who came to save us from our sins, should have taught his Apostles contrary doctrines?"

"Oh! I don't suppose he did. I have no doubt the Apostles understood everything, and they formed the true church. But it has been so mixed up since."

Catherine raised her eyes imploringly, and wrung her hands.

"The good Lord knows," she said, "I wish I could tell you all about it. I know it, I have it all in my heart, but I cannot explain it. If only a priest were here! He would make it just as clear as day."



“How should one of your priests know any better than one of our ministers?”

“Don’t it stand to reason,” said Catherine, almost scandalized at my placing her minister and mine in the same sentence, “that priests of the true church should understand all about the church better than those who do not believe in it? In the first place, they are very learned, and, besides, they are enlightened by the Holy Ghost.

“And I have just as much reason to think that ours are also. By the way, you have to confess all your sins to your priests, don’t you?”

Catherine bowed her head silently.

Now, I had no thought of asking this question. Rather, I had thought of it before to-day, but resolved not to speak of it. In the catechism and prayer-book I have read all that is said upon the ‘Sacrament of Penance,’ as it is called, and it seemed to me too sacred and solemn a subject to be spoken of lightly. But I felt in a strange, unusual, obstinate mood just then. Catherine and her singular books had become, in some sort, antagonists with which I was no longer to dally or sport, but which I was to attack and overcome. Either her books were all wrong, or my preconceived notions of her religion were altogether false. My own father was a clergyman of the Congregational Church. Would not he be likely to know about all religions and all churches, and choose for himself what he thought most likely to be right? At all events, I ought to believe as my



father did. Perhaps he thought so; that he ought to believe as his father did, and never inquired into it. I wonder if he ever read any books at all like these of Catherine's! I shall make it my business to look over some of his books when it comes a little warmer weather, when I won't freeze up in the garret; that is, if I can make my way through festoons and tapestries of cobwebs. Most likely they are musty and moth-eaten, to say nothing of depredations of rats, who make a haunted castle of our house.

As I have said, Catherine replied to my question by a nod simply. She, however, kept her eye upon me, as much as to say, "I have had some experience with Protestants; I know what is coming, but I shall not flinch."

"You do not believe that the priest can forgive your sins, do you?"

"Yes," was her firm reply.

"Then you must believe him equal to God?"

"Oh! no, Miss Myrrha. Why do you think that?"

"Why, how can he forgive your sins, if he cannot see into your heart, and know what they are?"

"We have to *tell* him our sins."

"But supposing you keep back the worst ones—how is he going to know?"

"He can only suppose that we tell him all. If we do not, his absolution does us no good, and we are more wicked in the sight of God than before; we



have committed sacrilege, and told a lie to the Holy Ghost."

"How can that be? Your priest is only a man. Is it any worse to lie to him than to any one else?"

"Miss Myrrha, you don't know anything about it. I wish, O my God! that you did."

"Do you suppose that every one who goes to confession to a priest unfolds every sin, as unto God?"

"If he does not, he is a very bad Catholic, and will never go to heaven unless he repent before he dies, and makes a good confession."

I had already a tolerably clear understanding of the Catholic "Sacrament of Penance" from those books I had examined. I saw quite clearly that the validity of the absolution rested upon the proper dispositions of the penitent. He must be heartily sorry for his sins, and purpose amendment for the future. He must make a good confession, as in the presence of God who sees him, and it is always on the supposition that the confession is *good* that the priest pronounces the absolution. Behind and before all this must be the firm faith that "confession" is of divine institution; that God had conferred upon frail mortal man his own divinest attribute, that of forgiveness of sin. Two weeks ago my whole nature would have revolted against this proposition. Now, if I do not accept it—and I do not—I am extremely puzzled to know what this passage in the New Testament can mean, or can possibly refer to: "Receive ye the Holy



Ghost—whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.” I see not how I am to be enlightened upon this or several other points—for this good Catherine, as she herself admits, cannot explain, though I see she understands or has faith in them. I wished to see, by thus questioning her, if she understood these things as taught by her books, or if she understood them as Protestants declare Catholics to understand them. I could perceive that she was all right, but then she is more intelligent than most of her class. I determined to persevere still further.

“I presume you are honest and sincere—I have no doubt you are, but do you think that all Catholics understand the doctrine of confession as you do? Do not the majority of Catholic people commit a great many sins, saying to themselves, ‘For a sum of money I can obtain pardon for this,’ and after absolution they sin as before without the least remorse of conscience?”

“No, ma’am. I don’t know of a single Catholic so ignorant of his religion as that. Every Catholic child, before his first Holy Communion, is obliged to know his catechism by heart. If he cannot read, it is taught him. There are Catholics, ma’am, who do not live as they should, and are a scandal to their religion. In fact, we all know, better than we do. Ignorance of what our religion teaches we are not guilty of, however unlearned we may be in other things.”



“But it seems so monstrous ; it has such a strange sound, to pay money for the pardoning of one’s sins.”


“I have been a Catholic twenty-eight years, ma’am, and I have never given money to a priest when I have been to confession, nor have I ever known it to be done. If Protestants would talk about us less, and learn about us more, they would not believe such bad things of us.” And with this remark Catherine punched a hole quite through her handkerchief, which she had been nervously fingering.

“Very true,” I said, rising. “I hope, Catherine, I have said nothing to hurt your feelings. If all Catholics are like you, I shall be disposed to think them the best people in the world. But your religion is so altogether different from ours—and there is so much of it, I do not know whenever or how-ever you get to learn it all.”

“We are brought up with it, Miss Myrrha—and that is why we live in it and die in it. Our religion is our all, ma’am. God gave it to us—blessed be his name !”



## III.

 HIS morning, mamma wished me to read to her. I took up a small volume, *Hannah More's Private Devotion*. After reading a page or two, which seemed to me unusually stupid—because I could not concentrate my mind upon it, doubtless—a thought occurred to me. Hastily dropping the book, I ran up-stairs, and returned as soon, bringing with me the beautiful work of Thomas à Kempis, *The Following of Christ*. I opened at “The Royal Road of the Holy Cross,” which was already my favorite portion of a book which had for me the impress of a divine inspiration :

“Why, then, art thou afraid to take up thy cross, which leadeth to the kingdom? In the cross is salvation—life—protection from enemies.

“In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind—joy of spirit.

“In the cross is height of virtue—perfection of sanctity.

“There is no health of soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross.

“Take up therefore thy cross, and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting.

“He is gone before thee, carrying his cross, and he died for thee upon the cross, that thou



mayest also bear thy cross, and love to die on the cross.

“Because if thou die with him, thou shalt also live with him; and if thou art his companion in suffering, thou shalt also be his companion in glory.

“Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.

“Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt, and as seems best to thee; and thou wilt still find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly; and so thou shalt always find the cross.

“No man hath so heartfelt a sense of the passion of Christ, as he whose lot it hath been to suffer like things.

“The cross, therefore, is always ready, and everywhere awaiteth thee.

“Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for wheresoever thou goest thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt always find thyself.

“If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end; namely, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end.

“If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee, and loadest thyself the more, and nevertheless thou must bear it.

“Dost thou think to escape that which no mortal ever could avoid? What saint ever was in the world without his cross and tribulation?

“For even our Lord Jesus Christ himself was



not for one hour of his life without the anguish of his passion.

"It behooved that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead, and so enter into his glory.

"And how dost thou seek another way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy cross?

"The whole life of Christ was a cross, and a martyrdom; and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy?"

I had read thus far—and I knew it almost by heart—when I was interrupted.

"Myrrha, my child, what book is that?"

I replied by reading aloud the title-page.

"Whose is it—where did you get it?"

"It belongs to Catherine—our good Catherine, mamma. Do you not like it?"

I glanced at Catherine, who was sewing in another part of the room. She blushed as I spoke, without looking up, however.

"Is there much of it—is it a large or small book?" And mamma raised her head, that she might see from beneath her great green shade the size of the book. "Oh! there is a good deal of it," she continued. "I am so glad! It does me so much good. Read on, Myrrha."

I finished "The Royal Road of the Holy Cross." I read "Of the Internal Discourse of Christ to a Faithful Soul," "Truth speaketh within us without Noise of Words," "That we ought to Walk before God in Truth and Humility," "Of the Wonderful Effect of Divine Love," "That all Things are to be



referred to God, as to our Last End," "That it is sweet to despise the World, and to serve God," "Of acquiring Patience," "Of the Obedience of an Humble Subject," "Of considering the Secret Judgments of God, that we be not puffed up with our own Good Works," "That True Consolation is to be sought in God alone," "That all Solitude is to be placed in God," "Of supporting Injuries"—in short, what chapter could I name in this inimitable volume which must not have proved a comfort to a poor soul who for months had not been able to bear the light of day?

Mamma's dinner was brought in, and I went out to mine. When I returned, I found that, contrary to custom, she had cleared her dishes, which Catherine was in the act of carrying away.

"You have a better appetite than usual," I said. "You have eaten up everything, for once. How does that happen?"

One of her rare, faint smiles played upon her features, and she replied in her usually languid way:

"I scarcely know myself. Only I ate without thinking of my food. I do not suppose I can tell you now of what it consisted. I was thinking of what you have been reading. Please read to me again the author's name."

I did as requested, adding, "Translated from the Latin."

"From the Latin! Why, it must be centuries old! Nobody writes in Latin in these days. But



that doesn't matter, that I know of—only I do like to know something about an author that interests me."

I continued my reading until Catherine returned from her dinner. Then mamma said to her :

"Catherine, where did you find this good book?" And Catherine replied :

"I have always had it, ma'am—or rather I should not say so exactly. I had one just like it, only that it was small and old, which I brought from Ireland with me. It had been my mother's—so for many reasons I prized it highly. A little child, at a place where I lived a year or two ago, got possession of it, and nearly tore it to pieces. I have the fragments still in my trunk. The child's mother was so kind as to replace it with this, which is much richer and finer—though, of course, it cannot be to me quite what mine was."

"I should have thought," pursued mamma, "that, having been brought up in Ireland, you would have been a Catholic."

"And that is what I am, ma'am—I am a Catholic."

"A Catholic! And you never told me!"

"Had you asked me, ma'am, I should have told you. I never deny my religion."

"Put away the book, Myrrha," said my mother authoritatively. "And, Catherine, I shall not need your services after to-day. You can leave by to-morrow's stage. You may go now, and pack your trunk."



Catherine went out, closing the door softly behind her, and mamma and I were alone. The discovery, then, had been made, and so much sooner than I had hoped or intended. What was to be done? Mamma's first question evinced her taking it for granted that I was acquainted with Catherine's religious faith.

"When did you first learn that this girl was a Catholic?"

So soon was "my good, good Catherine" changed into "this girl."

"Since the fourth day after her arrival."

"Of course, she could afford to lose no time in slyly affecting your mind, and penetrating it with her pernicious poison. She has been well trained—she performs her part well. She is, no doubt, fresh from the school of the priests, and has perjured her soul with vows to do their bidding."

"How can you talk thus, mamma? You are very unjust to Catherine, who—"

"Do not justify or uphold that deceitful woman, who has crept into my house to win my child for the evil one."

"You forget, dear mamma, that we begged her of Mrs. Farnsworth, who, to accommodate us, returned to Charlestown without her, who was nurse for her children. And you forget, too, how often we have both thanked Heaven for sending us so good a person, in place of that careless, heartless Hannah, who would shout so loud at class-meeting, but who seemed really to have no religion whatever."



“But to have a Papist in the house! I wonder your father does not rise from his grave.” And she broke into a passionate fit of weeping.

I was alarmed at this. Such excitement would ruin her poor eyes. I fell on my knees by her side, and begged her to be quiet.

“Listen to me,” I said. “Let me tell you just how it all happened. I discovered Catherine’s religion by accident—without the least design or knowledge on her part.” And I went on to relate all that has been above recorded. I held her thin hand clasped in mine, as I spoke, rapidly, hurriedly, that she might not interrupt me. She heard me calmly to the end. Then she wrung her hands, and cried:

“God have mercy upon us—the mischief is already wrought, I fear!”

“No, no, mamma, not a bit of it. I am not a Catholic—how can I be? I know only one Catholic, Catherine, who is a Christian, if there is one. I have read the catechism, the prayer-book, and this other one dear, dear book, that is so beautiful. There is nothing bad in any of them. On the contrary, everything in them is so good that it is absolutely charming. Shall I despise them because I find them belonging to a poor servant of our house? No, were she ten times a Catholic!”

“O my child—my poor child, your mind is already poisoned!”

I was still upon my knees by my mother’s side.



I repeated aloud the Acts of Contrition, Faith, Hope, and Love. "Dear mother," I continued, "those prayers are in the Catholic prayer-book, and in the little book of Catherine's which contains all the Christian doctrines taught in her church."

"Those books are probably just gotten up to lie around loosely in Protestant houses, especially intended to fall into the hands of an artless child like yourself."

"That could not be possible, could it?"

"What is not possible to these unscrupulous enemies of the church of God?"

"But they claim that they constitute the only true church."

"Their claiming it doesn't make it so. No; in reality they are the kingdom of Anti-Christ spoken of in the Bible. You will see from reading *Barnes' Notes* that the prophecy of the coming of Anti-Christ applies strictly and remarkably to these Papists. You have not forgotten the horrors of the Inquisition, the massacre—"

"Please, mamma," I said, "do not let us be tortured by any such recollections. We have nothing to do with them. They have nothing to do with the pious teachings of these books."

"But they *have* to do with it. Actions speak louder than words. The whole past history of that cruel kingdom of Satan proves clearly that it has never been actuated by any such pious precepts as you have read to me this morning. Such a book as this *Following of Christ* is the lure held out by



the crafty spider for the innocent fly. Depend upon it, my child, it is a poison for the unsuspecting."

"Then, mamma, it is a most charming poison, such as must waft souls into heaven—sweeter to me than other people's honey."

"You do not see, my child, to what it leads."

"Yes I do, mamma. It has led my soul nearer to God. It makes me think of him every day and hour of my life. It makes me love Jesus, as my father, my brother, my friend, my all."

"And, Myrrha, did you not do this before?"

"Never, mamma, or not at all as now. I thought of God coldly and carelessly, as I think of the stars—as being far off and unattainable. Somewhat as I thought of the Hindoo gods—I knew that they existed, but not for me; and thought of heaven as of Africa or India—a place of habitation for souls which I was unlikely ever to behold."

"I did not know, Myrrha, that I had such a little heathen in my own house."

"As little did I know or dream of it. I was as senseless as an image of clay. Now I have eyes, and I see!"

"I wish I could say as much, dear. But I am tired—very tired. You will have to get me ready to lie down. How am I to get along without Catherine?"

"I think you could get along tolerably, if you would allow me to do for you. But why send Catherine away? Please, mamma, let me speak



for her"—as she was about interrupting me. "What has she done?—what left undone? What has she said to offend? Literally nothing! Yet you send her away. Why? Because you discover that she holds a religious faith which you cannot approve. But reflect. She was brought up in this faith. She knows no other. She is not answerable for the sins of the whole Catholic Church. It is not probable she has ever seen a house of Inquisition or an instrument of torture. You regarded her as almost perfect before you made this unfortunate discovery. Forget that you have made it, and see only in her the good, faithful, humble servant of the last three weeks. When you shall have discovered her to be deceitful, false, scheming, then only will you be justified in sending her away. Dear mamma, for your own sake, think better of your hasty dismissal of the best of servants."

"It is on your account, Myrrha. I would not fear her snares were she Satan transformed. But for you, Myrrha, to have the least leaning to that church of iniquity!"

"Cannot you see, mamma, there is not the least danger?"

"But you will read her books? Promise me that you will read them no more."

"But, mamma, I have already read them—and only good has come from them. Let me go on reading them to you. They will, at least, be something new to interest you. If they contain only good, why, let us have it."




If they contain evil also, let us discover and discard it."

For some time longer I reasoned and persuaded, till at length she yielded to her own silent wish that Catherine should remain.



IV.

 SEVERAL weeks gone by, and without a word added to these pages. Mamma's eyes became slightly worse again from the excitement and fit of weeping to which she gave way when we came so nearly losing Catherine. They are still better now than before. Catherine bathes them night and morning from a little vial of her own, which she says is very good for them. Mamma has great faith in it. No other remedy has been used with so good effect. I have read all of Catherine's books to mamma. She does not know what to think of them. She, however, raises more objections than I do. But they have taken a firm hold of her mind.

One day she said to Catherine, after I had finished the *Lives of the Early Martyrs*: "The strongest objection against your church is, that it does not allow you to read the Bible."

"But it *does* allow me to read the Bible."

"Why, then, have you no Bible along with your other books?"

"I have one in my trunk. It was my mother's Bible. When I came to America, it was my father's parting gift."

"Is it possible," exclaimed my mother, "that we have never heard anything about your church but



falsehoods? Have you any objections to my seeing this Bible of yours?"

"None in the world, ma'am." And Catherine laid aside her sewing and left the room.

"I wonder if she *really* has a Bible, or if she will come back with some excuse about having had it lost or stolen," spoke mamma incredulously, involuntarily faithful to tradition upon this point.

I wondered how she could judge Catherine so harshly, when she had never yet detected her in the slightest deviation from the truth. I, however, said nothing, fully confident that the promised book would be forthcoming.

Catherine returned directly, placing the book in mamma's hands, whose eyes would barely admit of an examination sufficing to prove that it was indeed the blessed Word of God.

"And you brought this from Ireland?"

"I did, ma'am."

"And you are at liberty to read it whenever you please?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Myrrha, I wish you would go over to Mr. Wells', and ask him to please come and see me."

Now, Mr. Wells is our pastor. He succeeded poor papa in the Congregational Church, and has now been here fifteen years. I was surprised at mamma's sudden request, and somewhat terrified. At the same time, I was curious to know what she might have to say to him. I lost no time in performing her errand, and as Mr. Wells was at



home he came over at once. My mother still held in her hand that Catholic Bible, that had found its bold way into the heart of New England, its enemy, still unburned, unscattered. She commenced in her gentle tone of voice :

“ I understand from my daughter, Mr. Wells, that in your sermon of last Sunday you referred to the commonly received opinion that Catholics are not allowed to read the Bible—that Catholic priests burn the Bible wherever they find it ? ”

“ Your daughter informed you correctly. I repeated that assertion, than which the Gospel is not more true.”

“ I do not dispute you, remember, But I wish you to reconcile it with this stubborn fact which lies before us. I hold in my hand a Catholic Bible. It is the property of Catherine Daly, who brought it with her from Ireland, the land of Catholics. She assures me it was her mother’s book, given to that mother by her uncle, who was a priest. Catherine, whom you see here present, is surprised at our belief that she is not allowed to read the Bible.”

“ How long have you been from Ireland,” said Mr. Wells to Catherine.

“ Twelve years last summer, sir.”

“ And you brought this Bible with you ? ” reaching over and taking it from mamma’s hand.

“ I did, sir.”

“ Do you read it much ? ”

“ Not so much as my other books, which I better understand.”



"Then you do not understand this very well?"

"Certain portions of it I do; and those I find in my catechism."

"But you do not study this book, and exercise your own judgment upon different passages."

"I do not interpret it—if that is what you mean. The church is the interpreter of Holy Scripture."

"Exactly. You see, Mrs. Lake, this young woman admits that, even though she reads this book, she is not at liberty to judge for herself upon a single verse. She might just as well have admitted the general allegation of being denied the Bible; for what is the use of reading it, if you must take other people's *ipse dixits* as to what it means?"

"There seems to me to be quite a difference, Mr. Wells. I never read my Bible solely to extract and build up doctrines. I read it for the comfort I find in its precious promises—for consolation in its divine words of love. And as to judging for myself with regard to a single portion of the Inspired Word, I would much prefer to depend upon an authority so reliable as to be unquestionable."

"Which you can never find in this world, madam; nor do I deem it desirable."

"I do not know about that, sir. It is my impression that, if the six hundred sects, who all found their faith upon the Bible, yet all follow different doctrines and practices, could listen to one voice telling them in what things precisely to join and become one, they would have reason to fall on their knees, thank God, and do reverence to that voice."



“ Oh! yes, madam ; if earth were heaven, it would not be earth. One must follow the voice of his conscience, and this Holy Word of God, ‘ which is a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path. ’ ”

“ Will you tell me, Mr. Wells, if you please, in what the Catholic Bible differs from ours ? ”

“ The Catholic Bible, Mrs. Lake, contains books that are not canonical. You must know that most of the doctrines of the Catholic Church have no warrant in Scripture. Therefore they have made use of certain books, written at an early day, and at that time considered as wanting the seal of inspiration. These, however, form a part of their Bible. Besides, their translation is just made to suit their peculiar views and institutions. ”

“ Their translation—but does not this and ours come from the same tongue ? ”

“ Yes, that is true ; but you know enough about translations to know how easy it is to give such rendering to words as may be most desirable or expedient. ”

“ But, Mr. Wells, I cannot think that men charged with the translation of God’s Holy Word could wilfully misinterpret. ”

“ You have more faith in human nature than it will bear, I fear. ”

“ Our Bible is what is termed King James’ Translation. Now, the Holy Bible must have been in existence since the days of the Apostles. As there was but the Catholic Church from the time of Christ up to the Reformation, how was the



Bible preserved?—especially as the church itself burned and chained Bibles.”

“We suppose, Mrs. Lake, there were Christians scattered all over the world during all those many centuries. Many lived in caves and holes of the earth; it was by such as these that the good book was preserved. Moreover, it was the will of God that his Word should not perish; and God’s will no man can withstand.”

“You will please pardon my persistent questioning, Mr. Wells. I have been seriously thinking for the last few weeks. You will not deem me a heretic, I hope, if I tell you I have been reading the Catholic catechism.”

“‘Playing with fire’—‘handling two-edged tools.’ Your daughter has not, I hope?”

“Yes, my daughter reads everything to me.”

“Can you be aware of the danger you encounter in exposing her youthful mind to such specious errors? As regards yourself, there may not be the same danger; still, even in your own case, I would counsel precaution, and avoidance of any and every book touching upon that so-called religion of delusions, superstitions, and lies.”

“Bear with me a moment, Mr. Wells. We have read a most dark, gloomy, sinful, revolting side of that religion in the books of our Sunday-school library—books that, if put out in the guise of fiction, would be tolerated only in saloons and gambling-houses. We have read and received them as truths. We have been led to believe they



represented faithful pictures of the life and teachings of a corrupt, wicked church. Do we not act contrary to our every other mode of conduct, when we thrust aside without examination, and with contempt, books that fall accidentally in our way, in which that church teaches her children her doctrines, precepts, theory, and practice? If we find them to harmonize with the tales in our Sunday-school books, we have but to fling them aside; if not, they naturally set us to thinking."

"And you have thought too much for your good, madam. The trouble with your eyes has affected your mind. You are in a condition to receive false impressions easily, and you cannot be too much upon your guard. It appears to me incredible that any sane person can look with the slightest toleration upon a society, presumptuously claiming for itself the title of 'the church of God,' which unblushingly teaches the worship of Mary, the worship of saints, and their relics, and, above all, puts forth the blasphemous assumption that her priests have the power of pardoning sins."

"You do not believe, then, that Christ ever gave that power to the ministers of his church?"

"Decidedly not. It is the most wicked presumption that ever man in his pride has arrogated to himself. Christ give to mortal man the power to forgive sins? Never. Where do we read of it?"

"Well, what do you think this passage means? How do you explain it? 'And Jesus breathing on



them, said: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye forgive shall be forgiven them, and whosoever sins ye retain shall be retained.'"

Mr. Wells did not reply for a moment. He seemed in a brown study; as if those words had fallen on his ear for the first time. Mamma continued:

"There was certainly given to those to whom Jesus spoke the power of forgiving sins, else our Saviour promised that which he had not power to give, which cannot for a moment be supposed."

"Very well," observed Mr. Wells, rallying. "He was speaking to the Apostles. Christ *may* have given that power to the Apostles."

"But is it not *certain* that he gave it to them—and they were but men?"

"Remarkable men, however. They had also the power of performing miracles, even of bringing the dead to life. It does not follow that ministers of the nineteenth century shall raise the dead. The gift of miracles ceased with the Apostles—so also did that of forgiving sins, if they ever had it."

"We *assume* only that miracles ceased. Our Bible, upon which we wholly rely, makes no mention that miracles shall cease with the Apostles. The seventy disciples wrought miracles as well as the twelve. On the contrary, Christ expressly says, 'Go teach all nations whatsoever I have commanded you.' Was it merely his immediate disciples who were to teach all nations, or did not the command extend to all who should come after,



for he says, 'I will be with you to the end of the world'? If Christ is with the ministers of his church, is there aught impossible for them to do in his name which the Apostles did, if they possess the same gift of faith?"

"But they do not. And we must not expect improbabilities. History goes to show that the age of miracles ceased with the Apostles. In their time, miraculous manifestations were necessary in order to establish the truths of the Christian religion, and to prove that Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God. That being accomplished, the working of miracles was no longer necessary."

"Our Bible does not tell us that. The plainer inference from it is that they should continue in the church. The Catholic Church claims still to possess the gift of miracles, and in that one thing, at least, seems not to have cut herself off from the church of the Apostles."

"Whoever can swallow all the superstitions and admit all the claims of that church must be possessed of an egregious credulity."

"You believe though, do you not, that God is just as able to impart the gift of miracles now as long ago?"

"Most assuredly I do; but for some wise reason he does not."

"I would like rather to think that our good God, our Heavenly Father, does not thus conceal himself from his most faithful, loving children; that there are pious souls upon earth, and *have* been



throughout all these eighteen hundred years, who have found such favor in his eyes, as, through their faith and love, to have won his wondrous gifts. I love to think thus. It does not so separate us from the early church. It should be our study, it seems to me, to believe and practise just what the Apostles did."

"And do we not, Mrs. Lake? Can you tell me in what we fail?"

"We fail in faith; so that, if God would through his servants work miracles, he could not for us—for we would not believe. Faith on our part is necessary; and we have it not."

"We do not wish to preach what we cannot practise. The gift of miracles and the power of pardoning sins we willingly yield to the Papists."

"Coming back to this subject of pardoning sins: the early Christians were exhorted to 'confess their sins one to another.' And the converts came to be baptized, 'confessing their sins.'"

"But it does not say they confessed their sins to a priest?"

"No, it does not. Is it not natural to suppose, however, that he would be the proper person?"

"We also confess our sins. We openly proclaim in presence of our brethren that we are sinners in the sight of God."

"That we are sinners—true. But that is not confessing our sins. We do not specify a single misdeed. We do not even recall our sins singly, deploring them as separating us from God. We



only say in a general way—‘We are sinners, deserving of God’s displeasure.’”

“God looks at the heart. He knows our sins much better than we do, and better than we could tell them over to a priest.”

“Admitted. But if Jesus Christ authorized the ministers of his church to forgive sins or to retain them, he must have made it obligatory upon penitents to avail themselves of this Sacrament of Penance. You have a horror at the thought of yourself pronouncing absolution over a sinner. Might you not equally shrink from pouring the waters of Baptism upon the brow of the convert? How do you know that he is a fit recipient? That he is or is not, you leave to the convert’s soul and his God. You baptize him in the name of the ‘Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ In that Name does the Catholic priest absolve the sinner from his sins. In the administration of any and every sacrament, he is but the minister, the agent, the servant of his Divine Lord.—You perceive, Mr. Wells, I have not only read Catherine’s books, but I have studied them well and prayerfully.” And she smiled a sort of deprecatory smile, as if entreating her pastor not to judge her too harshly.

Mr. Wells arose and took his hat.

“I cannot but perceive, Mrs. Lake, that you are treading upon very dangerous ground. I am more than surprised—I am grieved, shocked. I could not have believed it possible that your fine mind should have become thus warped. You are very



far gone, believe me. Your servant-girl must have bewitched you. How do you know she ever came from Ireland? How do you know but these books are of purely American manufacture, calculated to act as lures to unwary Protestants? You recollect the verse:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
That to be dreaded needs but to be seen;  
But, seen too oft, familiar with its face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace'?

"You do not intend to say that you think I have been making a study of vice?"

"Vice in disguise—or what will lead to that, you may depend. I am exceedingly sorry—exceedingly. May the Lord grant you to see where you stand before it be too late."

With this parting, Mr. Wells bowed low and retired.

I first broke the solemn silence that prevailed thereafter. That I had not broken it at several intervals heretofore was because my tongue had done violence to itself.

"So, mamma dear, we are in the ditch!"

"In the what?"

"In the ditch. You know, 'if the blind lead the blind,' where they shall both fall, don't you?"

"Pray, my dear, be serious."

"But, somehow, I do not feel serious. You did splendidly, though, mamma. If you could do so well as that, what couldn't an intelligent, native-born Catholic have done! I had no idea



you had gone into the subject so thoroughly—to such an extent. But, mamma, there are two more points wherein Catholics seem to follow the Bible more than we Protestants. One is fasting. It seems so strange that, while that is insisted upon, almost as much as praying, we should never even be exhorted to the practice of it. Then, in the matter of Extreme Unction. We take no notice of this injunction of St. James; he might as well never have written it, so far as we are concerned: ‘Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.’ Yet, in some one of our Sunday-school books, the fulfilment of this command is ridiculed, and styled ‘fixing the soul off for Purgatory.’ ”

“ Myrrha, please talk no more. I am very tired and nervous. You had better go to your room; and, Catherine, help me to lie down.”

Catherine meantime had her face buried in her hands, weeping; through her sobs brokenly thanking God “that he had made his light to shine in that house.”



## V.



MY diary, I fear, is fast becoming a prosy affair. Indeed, it has ceased to be a diary; for weeks and weeks elapse without my glancing at it. The truth is, trivial things have lost for me their interest. Or, rather, the trifling incidents of everyday life appear to me more trivial than ever; and I begin to think that when, fifty years hence, I look over these pages, through magnifying-glasses, I shall not care to distract my memory by striving to recall who can be the Carrie Day who ran in a moment on the 19th of October, or the Johnny Morgan who, on "November 1," came with his mother's compliments, and would we spend the afternoon and take tea? Or that, on another certain day, I attempted my first biscuits, getting them so hard that mamma called them "cannon-balls," and she feared our neighbor's pig would break his teeth in their mastication. Or that my first cake, made on the principle, "the more of a good thing, the better," melted all down in the dish, firmly resolved to simmer simply and not bake, and thenceforward was termed, to my chagrin, and often referred to, as "Myrrha's butter-cake." Whether or not these things might interest me as an octogenarian, I cannot say; but, if they do, the four volumes that are



already closely written will be as much as will be good for my impaired vision and imperfect memory.

We are quite alarmed about mamma. Ever since her eyes commenced to improve, she has had a cough, and her general health seems to be failing. Her two sisters died of consumption; hence she has long been under the impression that the same disease would terminate her own life. She has little appetite for food, and she becomes daily more thin and languid. Her mind also is very ill at ease. She had a severe fit of remorse after her conversation with Mr. Wells. She had not at all realized or suspected until then how far in thought she had wandered from the faith of her church. Her readiness to combat all that Mr. Wells could urge, her self-evident satisfaction at what seemed to her his inconsistencies, after the close of the controversy aroused and alarmed her. What had she done? Discussed religious matters with her pastor—a minister of God, and in every point had presumed upon her own opinion, slighting and setting his at naught. What right had she to be studying into these matters, that, after all, belonged to theologians, and not to women and children? Was it not reasonable to suppose that her father and her husband, both of whom were clergymen, had examined the subject well, and could give a reason for the faith that was in them? Had they not made themselves acquainted with all these teachings of this “kingdom of anti-Christ,” and rejected them as being false, untenable, dan-



gerous? If the Catholic system was right and just in the sight of heaven, how was it that God had suffered Protestantism to so great an extent to supplant it? At all events, was there not in the reformed religion all that was necessary to salvation? Her dear friends had died in that faith—was it not as good for her as for them? Why should she trouble herself about a matter that really was quite beyond her reach? She had never thought for a moment of any outward change of faith. There was no Catholic church, no priest, within fifty miles. After all, what harm had been done? She had been guilty of speaking too confidently, too presumingly, to her pastor, but she could send for him and make an apology. She felt sure of God's pardon if she had been led mentally astray, and henceforth she would throw away all these conflicting doubts and speculations, and rest simply and securely upon the love of Christ. For the most part, mamma remained silent and reserved; she had, however, her seasons of confidence, when she shared with me her doubts, regrets, and resolves. I did my utmost to reassure her, and to strengthen the impression that no harm had been done. If we had conquered a prejudice, and come to believe that there might be good in a church of which we had thought only evil, we had been only in the way of our duty. It did not follow that, because we thought our servant-girl a good Christian, and because we found she had been well instructed and grounded in the Catholic faith,



we were to go straightway from Congregationalism to Catholicity. Neither mamma nor I had thought of such a thing, I was sure.

Mr. Wells was called in again, and a plain statement made of the case.

Mamma expressed sorrow and regret if she had offended in anything, and announced her determination of inquiring no further into doctrinal points of religion.

Mr. Wells was much pleased at this, and took the occasion to make an afternoon discourse upon the fulness, fitness, and simplicity of Protestantism. He had everything his own way. Mamma and I listened attentively, neither any more thinking of interrupting him than as if he had been in his pulpit, and we in our own church-pew. He closed by comparing Protestantism to Papacy, as he was pleased to term the Catholic Church. "Every article of Protestantism," said he, "has for its foundation the pure Word of God. Of that we are certain. But look at the Church of Rome! Do you find within the lids of the Bible such a word as Purgatory? Do you find one word of the worship or even the veneration of Mary? Can you point to one passage that teaches the invocation of saints, or from which you can infer that they hear our prayers? Do you find that Christ appointed a pope to rule over his church? No; you look in vain for popes or cardinals in the inspired Word of God. And what but the completest ignorance and superstition could tolerate



what is called the ceremony of the Mass? A mass indeed it is of ridiculousness and folly, without a redeeming grain of sense or intelligibility. What do the people know of or care for the barbarous Latin that the priest mumbles over with a haste as if for dear life? ‘Do hurry up, and have done with it,’ said a priest to Martin Luther, who was saying Mass for the first time at St. Peter’s in Rome. That is the impression always conveyed by a priest saying Mass—he is ‘hurrying up to have done with it.’ Then the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, contrary to all sense and reason. The idea is absurd that the bread and wine become changed in the hands of the priest into the real body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“But that we *do* find in the Bible, Mr. Wells,” I ventured to remark.

“No, we do not, my child. It is true our Saviour said, ‘This is my body,’ ‘This is my blood,’ but every one, not wilfully blind, can see that he spoke in a figurative way, which was a mode of expression often employed by him. Could not his disciples see for themselves that it was *not* his body nor his blood, for he stood visibly before them; and would Christ say to them what it was impossible for them to believe?”

“It would seem they must have understood him in a literal sense; for they marvelled greatly and questioned, and many went away, and ‘walked no more with him.’”



“We will not enter into an argument, if you please. In fact, the question is so clear it admits of no argument. And I really must go now. Mrs. Lake, I am heartily rejoiced at this good resolution of yours. Hold fast to it; and do not be troubling yourself with these intricate questions that concern graver heads. You have the truth, the whole truth; and it will lead you to heaven if you but follow it unquestioningly.”

I sat thinking after Mr. Wells' departure of the sermon he had preached a few Sundays ago, in which he had referred to the chained Bibles. He also dwelt at considerable length, in the same discourse, upon the slavery of conscience which was one of the features of that Bible-chaining church. “Every person,” he said, “should be allowed to think and judge for himself, especially upon so important a subject as his eternal salvation.” But mamma and I, venturing to take a step in that direction, judging for ourselves, were warned that we were treading on dangerous ground. He had judged that Congregationalism—what a long word, almost equal to transubstantiation—was just the right thing for us; and we had naught to do but to think it was.


I spoke to mamma about this inconsistency of Mr. Wells. She thinks, however, that his theory is right; that is, one of his theories—that we, being Congregationalists, should accept without question or dissent whatever our church teaches. And in like manner, she believes that Catherine, for



instance, should believe implicitly as she does all that her church teaches. In this she differs from her pastor; for, while mamma and I should rest quiet in believing, according to him Catherine should go on inquiring and judging for herself. I thought there was sound sense in her remark, that it was clearly the duty of every minister to preach the Gospel, and for every hearer to believe and obey. But if ministers differed as to what was Gospel and what was not, it could not be expected that people would be obedient to the church. I suggested that Protestantism should create a pope, that it should rally around him, kiss his toe, and promise obedience. Thus unity would be secured—and, with unity, what strides of progress might not Protestantism make!



VI.

OR a while I rather coincided with mamma, and strove to banish from my mind the questions that had so interested yet perplexed me. I commenced reading aloud *David Copperfield*, esteemed one of Dickens' best, in which my attention became quite engaged. It often happened, however, that when at the end of a chapter I paused to converse with mamma upon points of interest, as was my custom, she knew nothing whatever of the subject. This was discouraging, and caused me to lose my own interest in the book. I felt convinced that, notwithstanding her earnest resolution to the contrary, her mind was still dwelling upon those subjects of discussion which we each had tacitly resolved to let alone. If I referred to them, however, she gave no encouragement for pursuing them. But she was unusually silent and thoughtful. Poor Catherine! I know not what she thought—she said nothing; but I have been able to read from her face a sad disappointment that we failed to grasp "heaven's golden thread of light." Mamma becomes more and more attached to her. Catherine anticipates her every want. I often wonder why, between our good Catherine and myself, who are both so devoted, she does not speedily recover—instead of which, for I cannot



blind my eyes to the fact, she becomes gradually worse. From day to day the change is, perhaps, imperceptible; each month, however, marks an increased lassitude and emaciation. I am greatly alarmed, though Dr. Harris says I am foolishly so. He says there is no danger, and a few more weeks will bring her all right. God grant he may be correct. He must be. I could not live without mamma. After one of her severe coughing spells, she surprised me one day by asking Catherine to go and get her prayer-book.

"Give it to Myrrha," she said, when it was brought; "and, my child, read from it somewhere, anywhere."

By accident, or providentially, I opened to "Devotions for the Sick."

"'Devotions for the Sick,'" I repeated; "perhaps that will be too gloomy and sad for you."

"Read it—that is just what I want," said poor mamma, with unusual animation.

I read through the Devotions, including "Litany for the Sick," "Litany for a Happy Death," etc.

I had several times paused, that she might signify if she were wearied or wished me to discontinue. Each time she bade me go on, and when I had finished she said:

"Is that all—is there nothing more?"

"There are 'Prayers for the Dead, mamma,'" and I was frightened at the sepulchral tone of my own voice.



“Well, read me ‘Prayers for the Dead.’ It seems they don’t leave a friend or a Christian at the grave. They follow him to the throne of God with their prayers. And what do they say?”

I glanced at Catherine as I commenced. She had dropped her sewing, and with folded hands was prepared to follow me. I think I never before experienced so solemn a feeling as while reading that “Litany for the Dead.” My thoughts of the dead had been ever associated with the grave. Now, as I read, it seemed the whole upper air was filled with *shades*—silent shades, of which Virgil speaks. Mamma listened silently, but said nothing. Like *Oliver Twist*, however, her demand was for “more,” until I had read every litany the book contained. At length the twilight fell, and the reading ceased. Catherine went out to prepare toast and tea, which had come to be her nightly task to do for mamma, as in this province she could so excel Rachel, our kitchen-servant.

“Myrrha,” said mamma, “come sit by me.”

I flew to the ottoman at mamma’s feet. One thin hand she placed nervously in mine, the other she laid lovingly upon my head.

“Myrrha, dear child, I feel as if you are all that I have in this world. We seem recently to have exchanged places. You are naturally more self-reliant, more strong than I am; and latterly, as my physical weakness demands your strength, so does my mind seek to repose upon, or, at least, to share its confidence with, your firmer mental organization



and your more truly perceptive nature. Every day I perceive how your father lives again in his child. In his judgment, in his opinions, in his uprightness of thought and action, I had the utmost confidence. I have the same in you, Myrrha, youthful and untried though you be. I depend more upon the correctness of your reason, of your judgment, than upon that of my own. This is the occasion of that silence which, for the last few weeks, has been between us. The great subject which of late has become so interesting to us appealed to your reason and to your intellect; for me, it appealed to my heart, to my conscience. Not that I mean to say that your heart also was not affected; but I understand you so well as to know that to no theories and no propositions will you give credit unless they command the assent of your reason. Let you be convinced of the truth by whatever means, and, however repugnant may be its reception or attended with whatever inconveniences, you embrace it with all your heart. Let your father have been surprised by the new thoughts that have agitated you, and I would have seen in him the same silent but determined convictions that dwell in your mind, my child."

I winced at this, her intuitive knowledge of my secret heart. I had thought it hidden from all but God. She continued:

"I was not ready to abandon the faith of years. My father's and my husband's faith! I was not ready to be regarded by my little world of ac-



quaintances as a deluded mother, devoting herself and her child to the practices of superstition and idolatry. And, worse than all, to leave my circle of friendships for the society of strangers! It seemed to me like treason—like deserting my camp and going over to the enemy! No, I would never be so ungrateful, so false-hearted. These, Myrrha, are the objections which I have been revolving, accepting, and discarding. With you, your father's child, such objections would not weigh. They would prove as naught in the balance, were you sure it was *truth* in the opposite scale. I feared this, your passion for the omnipotence of truth. I fought my battle alone; for you would but have made me victor on the wrong side. And yet, Myrrha, though weary in the contest, I cannot yield. With no chance of conquest, I feel less than ever like giving up. If God has heard my countless prayers, he has not answered them. It is of my child I ask, What am I to do?"

Mamma's voice closed almost inaudibly, for she had fallen to weeping.

"Dear mamma," I cried, almost encircling her in my arms, "do not be troubled. God is good. Where is your faith? Are you not a Christian? If you die, will you not go to heaven? God does not require impossibilities. If we are not in the right way, it is not because we do not wish it with all our hearts. We find ourselves where we have been placed. We were brought up in the Protestant faith. If God chooses to show us our error,



we must be willing to look at the light he holds out. We must wait his own good time; but I believe it is coming for you and for me.

“I have been thinking, mamma. In the dead of night I think continually. I have a fancy—only a fancy—you know, that dear papa’s spirit comes sometimes near me, and I feel almost a certainty of an encouragement from him that we are seeking the truth, and that we shall surely find it. I never used to think of papa, never dream of him; but, since these new thoughts have taken possession of me, he seems to be near me to be cognizant of what I do and what I think. We must believe, mamma, if he so loved the truth, as you say, that, had it been presented to him, even faintly, as to us now, he would have accepted it with joy. Perhaps now he has learned it already; perhaps it is through his love and care for us, and in answer to his prayers, that these books telling of the old faith have come in our way. I do not feel uneasy nor anxious, only for you. I have learned to love God, and to pray to him in a way I did not know before. I have learned to invoke the saints and angels, to beg the assistance of their prayers and intercessions, and it seems to open heaven anew to me, and to bring me into a kind of companionship with the spirits of ‘the just made perfect.’ All this is not for me to sigh over, nor to repine against—no, I thank God rather, every hour of my life, and with every power of my being. With this communion between my soul and its God, what has



the outside world to do? Can it give me a better substitute? But I weary you. Eat your toast and drink your tea. Catherine, bring toast and tea for me also, that mamma and I may eat together."

So mamma and I had our tea, and a nice time we had. I had not seen her so cheerful in a long time. Even while I joked and laughed with her, I was forming a plan for the future. I must sleep upon it, however, before venturing to unfold it to her most interested.



## VII.



WELL, I slept upon my plan—waking more than sleeping, however. Mamma had been under the care of Dr. Harris more than a year, continually going from bad to worse. Was not a change of medical advisers to be advocated? She was accustomed to the heated air of her one favorite room; would not a removal to other quarters prove beneficial? For fifteen years she had sat under the “droppings of the sanctuary,” as presided over by Mr. Wells, during which time her spiritual state had been *in statu quo*, far from satisfactory to herself, even before Catherine’s advent to our home. A change of spiritual advisers could not prove detrimental; even Mr. Wells, good man as he was, could not but be sensible of this.

Abner White, my mother’s uncle, and his wife, Aunt Ruth, resided at Charlestown, Mass. When I was a child, I had spent a year in their family with mamma. They had repeatedly visited us, together with other relations in our town, and had as often urged us to repay the visits. Now, by going to Uncle Abner’s, all the changes necessary for mamma’s restoration would be effected. Besides, Catherine had come from Charlestown, where her sister resided, and the trip could but be viewed



favorably by her. And then, there was a Catholic church there, and, of course, a Catholic priest; and, in Catherine's estimation, it was only the instruction of this important personage which was wanting to impart to us the full light of faith, and to make of us perfect Catholics. "All under God," she used to say, "but God works by means of his priests."

With the real enthusiasm I felt, I unfolded to mamma this plan. I was not prepared for the opposition she made. Even in health she had been averse to leaving home. Her surroundings were all dear to her; her birds and her flowers were a constant music and fragrance. As an invalid, especially should she remain at home, she urged. Abroad, she would be in everybody's way, and everybody would be in her way. She would rest under the constant, harassing impression of being a burden and a trouble.

"How can you say that, dear mamma," I expostulated, "when you know that dear Aunt Ruth is the most generous, unselfish woman in existence, and would like nothing so well as to give up her pleasant south room to you, where is the nicest bay-window overflowing with flowers most elegant? Oh! I can see now the beautiful sunshine streaming in as though it loved to brighten up that spot above all others; it is just the place for you; you will revive there, and grow healthy and young again, I am confident. And Aunt Ruth is such a model housekeeper, and she does everything with such ease and quietness; nothing ever is a trouble to



her—least of all would you be, who always was her pet and favorite. She would give you such nice, delicate things to tempt your appetite, that you would really begin to eat again. As for Uncle Abner, I am his pet, you know. I will answer for it I shall be welcome; nothing would delight him so much as our coming. And still more important, you could have such good medical advice, which I know you are much in need of; and then we could get plenty of books, mamma, that should tell us all about that dear old religion.”

“Perhaps you are not aware of it, Myrrha,” sagaciously remarked my mother; “but is not this last reason for a visit to Uncle Abner’s your strongest and principal one? Not that I do not know you to be disinterested as to its advantage to my health, but you too love home, Myrrha, and to such a degree that I doubt if this contemplated visit would ever have entered your head—”

“Even admitting as much, which I am prepared neither to admit nor to deny, is not that of itself sufficient?”

My mother heaved a sigh. I continued:

“But I will not press the matter. Of course it is for you only to decide. You can ask the opinions of Dr. Harris and Mr. Wells. I would not myself think it best to go against their advice, especially that of your physician. But it seemed to me a most excellent idea.”

“I am not always of the same mind,” observed mamma, “with regard to accepting publicly the



Catholic faith. The truth is, I more often incline to the idea you once suggested, that it is better to entertain in our hearts these new devotions and doctrines, and not convulse our little world with the 'nine days' wonder' of forsaking the church of our fathers, and uniting with 'strange gods.' The very idea comes over me sometimes like a shock, and my soul shrinks from it; I pray God to keep me from such a strange, unusual step. I say to myself, it is unnecessary, uncalled for, and what once I would have shrunk from with horror. How, I think, remembering my father, my husband—how could I subscribe to that 'Profession of Faith' which you have several times read to me? 'This true Catholic faith, without which none can be saved,' I do freely profess and sincerely hold—a faith condemned by the whole Protestant world."

"Dear mamma," I interfered, "do not let us talk more upon that subject. It is too fatiguing; it wearies you. If we are to know no more, we already know too much. If we are to know no more, is it not best to think about it no more?"

"That is impossible. It has taken hold of me; it will not let me go. Herein is my inconsistency, for I will not let it go! O Myrrha, have pity upon your mother!"

I was never so distressed. At the same time, I was never more convinced that my plan for going away was to be carried into effect.



## VIII.

**D**R. HARRIS listened attentively as I detailed our proposed visit. He honored me by a smile of decided approval, and by these flattering words: "A wise little head, that of yours—a wise little head. I could not have made a better suggestion myself. In fact, I had thought change of scene would be advantageous to your mother, but as you were all women alone, I didn't see how—but I forgot your Uncle Abner's family—yes—yes, that is just the thing; and the sooner you are off, the better. Could you start by to-morrow?"

By to-morrow! What further confirmation need one have that Dr. Harris was an old, old bachelor? If he wished to take a trip to Boston, he had but to think of it, jump upon the train, and be off. What did he know about the hundred and one things that two women, and one of them an invalid, was to think of, hunt up, or to have bought, made, washed, and done up, to be folded nicely away in trunks, one, two, three, perhaps four? Plainly, just nothing at all.

Mamma said she did not think we could be ready in less than two weeks; she was for postponing it as long as possible. I said I thought by extra exertion we might be able to go in a week.



Catherine, by her suggestion, proved herself to be the most anxious for our earliest departure. She and Rachel, she said, could accomplish the washing and ironing the following day, should it prove sunny; she and I could do the packing at night, and we might be ready on the day after to-morrow. If anything needed to be made new or remodelled, we could just as well do it after our arrival.

Dr. Harris clapped his hands.

“Bravo!” he cried. “Catherine *carries the day*. Remember now,” he said, departing, “you are not to let me find you here after the day after to-morrow. I will come and see you off. I am particularly anxious to see the last of you.” And, with this equivocal compliment, he laughingly disappeared.

We sent for Mr. Wells the same afternoon. The doctor’s decided approval had so overcome mamma’s disinclination that I had only to announce to our pastor our intended visit. He did not enter into it with the same heartiness as had Dr. Harris. On the contrary, he raised objections of various kinds, the most prominent of which was that he thought change of any kind might be injurious to mamma. Was Catherine to accompany us? Certainly. He gave Catherine a searching look. Mr. Wells did not lack penetration. I could perceive that he was calculating the influence which might be brought to bear upon the state of our minds in a religious point. He made no allusion, however. On leaving, he signed for me to follow him into the hall. There he informed me that he



had met Dr. Harris on his return from our house, from whom he had learned our intended visit.

"The reason, Myrrha," he added, "why I so strongly discountenanced it, was because I think it will do your mother no good, and may do her harm."


"But Dr. Harris thinks it will do her good."

"He may have told you so; but he told me your mother was past hope; that she could not live two months!"

I looked at Mr. Wells as I had never before looked at mortal man. I neither reeled nor fell. I stood upright, and had a sense of growth in strength and stature. In that one steadfast gaze, I divined the motive of that cruel thrust. He returned my look—he attempted to speak, but no sound came from his lips—he passed out, never knowing how deep, how rankling the stab he had given me.



IX.

UCH a cordial welcome as we received from Uncle Abner and that best of women, dear Aunt Ruth! It brought tears from our eyes.

“What are you crying for? Homesick already? Ain’t sorry you’ve come?” questioned the tender-hearted old gentleman, who, at sight of our tears, was obliged to wink his eyes violently, and to swallow something that seemed choking him.

And here are we, mamma, Catherine, and I, domiciled in the well-remembered south room, which seems to me to be draperied with an invisible net-work of gold and red—sunshine and happiness. As for sunshine, there is plenty of that; and if only mamma would sit in it, and allow it to fall upon her in all its glory, I am sure it would have the effect of an invigorating path. She seems to avoid it, however, preferring her shawl and the gloomiest corner.

The new doctor, Dr. Jordan, has ordered almost all the beautiful flowers to be removed — says they are not good for sick people. Mamma pleaded hard for a few that are now in blossom—narcissus, hyacinths, a heliotrope, and her favorite rose-geranium: these, with a frown though, the doctor allowed to remain. Mamma stood the journey



bravely. Catherine—what cannot that girl do for invalids?—arranged her so comfortably that she slept nearly the whole distance. I had a book in my satchel, *Kirwan's Letters*, which Mr. Wells had handed us at parting with these words: that, "to a mind unprejudiced, this little book would be sufficient to outweigh all that could be said in favor of that so-called church, which was really the Anti-Christ."

I had forgiven Mr. Wells for reporting to me Dr. Harris' opinion in regard to mamma. Though he was not so sensitive as many, Mr. Wells was, or intended to be, thoroughly honest and truthful. I had no doubt that he reported correctly; but why should he have reported at all? Perhaps he conceived it to be really his bounden duty, at all hazards, to detain us where himself and his church should not be scandalized by a defection of one of its prominent members. And was not this his duty plainly? At all events, I forgave him, and the more freely in the prayerful hope that the sad prophecy might remain unfulfilled. I thanked him sincerely for the book, promising to read it thoughtfully and with care. It was with the intention of having it for car-reading that I had placed it in my satchel—an intention frustrated, as will be seen.

As Catherine was arranging double seats for mamma, I heard something drop on the floor; upon which I said to her to look down and see what she was treading upon. She did as directed,



picking up a book somewhat soiled, and minus one cover, which, smiling, she handed over to me. I drew back, intending to refuse the forlorn and infected-looking volume, when the title-page caught my eye, and, *je ne sais quoi*, impelled me to receive it.

"I would not handle it, it may have the small-pox," said Catherine, who had not intended me to touch it.

"*Questions of the Soul.* By I. T. Hecker, New York: The Catholic Publication House."

As was my habit, I read the whole of the title-page. Opposite was this verse:

"All thou wouldst learn I will make clear to thee—  
No riddle upon my lips, but such straight words  
As friends should use to each other when they talk."  
—*Prometheus.*"

This was a Catholic book evidently. None other could come from a Catholic Publication House. Glancing at the brief Preface, it closed thus:

"One thing we can truly say of the following sheets: they are not idle speculations. Our heart is in them, and our life's results. That they may be a means to answer life's problems to earnest souls is our only ambition. With this, knowing that truth is never spoken in vain, we send them forth."

"To earnest souls!" Was not mine an earnest soul? Through a mist of tears, I commenced reading over the table of contents. Then I turned



back, and re-read. Contrary to my usual custom, I could not wait to begin at the beginning. "Idea of the Church" was Chapter XIII. I would first read there, and continue through "Protestantism and the Church," which formed the subject of the following chapters.

I did not cease reading, however, at Chapters XIV. and XV. I became quite as much absorbed and forgetful of all else as when, in Catherine's little room, I first read wonderingly and delightedly from her prayer-book. I forgot the cars, noisy, disagreeable; I forgot mamma and Catherine; I remembered nothing; was conscious of nothing, only of these sublime words that spoke such divine truths to my soul. I turned back more than once to look at the author's name. I repeated it over and over. It was new to me; I had never heard it before. But it seemed to me I had known him, or he had known me; otherwise, how could he have spoken so aptly, so convincingly, of what I was inexpressibly longing to know? Perhaps, I queried, he is a priest. The very one so much talked of by Catherine who would make everything so clear! I shall have no need to listen now to a priest, I said, as I reached the "Conclusion." I can read this to mamma, and she will be quite convinced.

With a glowing cheek and a swelling of the heart, as if in reality I belonged to her, I read once and again of the church upon the final page:



“The church is the ever youthful bride of Christ. She is as pure, as bright, as fresh as on the day of her birth. She can never fail. In her bosom are the inexhaustible sources of inspiration, strength, courage, holiness.

“ ‘ Majesty,  
Power, glory, strength, and  
Beauty, all are aisled  
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.’ ”

I then had time to look at the soiled book as a whole. It had been badly used. It bore the marks of having been much read as well as of abuse. Had it spoken to others as to me, or had its words been received with misgivings, incredulities, and positive misbeliefs? Quite likely. For I thought of Mr. Wells, and could well conceive that upon his mind it could make no impression. There are certain minds, like bullets run in a mould; hard as a rock, without fissure or crevice. Even truth itself would roll down them, and slip off like a drop of water, leaving no trace, much less an impress. Only the manufacturer can remodel and remould his work. Sometimes, in his wisdom and infinite goodness, he melts the indurate metal, and exchanges the involuntary ignorance and prejudice for light and truth. While thus reflecting, we had reached our journey's end. In the confusion, I held tightly my precious book. At the last moment, however, I recollected it, and remembered I ought to leave it. One moment, though, was too brief a time, in which to resolve to abandon one's



treasure. The next moment was too late; and we found ourselves doing battle with the legion of hack-men, who shouted and brandished their whips, to our great discomfiture. So I reached Uncle Abner's with my book, if not with peace of mind.

The next day, however, I found I should have no more satisfaction in it. It had fallen in my way mysteriously, providentially. If the latest occupant of Catherine's seat had carried it off as I had, I should not have been blest by the reading of it. If I had not borne it away, some other solitary traveller, perhaps some "earnest soul," might have found therein knowledge, comfort, and joy. It must go back. Accordingly, yesterday morning, I gave Catherine some money, with directions to go to a book-store and purchase a new volume; after which, were she successful, to return the old one to the place whence I had taken it. She accomplished both errands, waiting her time at the depot, and depositing the book upon the very seat whence it had dropped at her feet. I explained to her the nature of the book, and that, as I should read it aloud to mamma, she would have an opportunity of knowing what had so enchained my attention during our journey. She regarded this affair of the book as a miraculous sign of the intention of Heaven in our thorough conversion.

She handed me the bright new book with manifest pleasure.

"That looks something like," she said, "though we ought not really to despise homely



things." She continued: "If you hadn't looked inside of that dirty foundling in the cars, see how much you might have lost. You are very peculiar, Miss Myrrha, very. You are not like any one else I ever knew. That is not saying I haven't the greatest respect for you."

The following day was Sunday, and Catherine went to church with great pleasure. She was very anxious for me to accompany her. But I did not wish to go. I dreaded going for the first time, and was not ready. Besides, I was in the midst of reading to mamma *Questions of the Soul*. She was as deeply interested as I had been. She leaned back in her easy-chair, gazing at me intently, as if taking in the sense of the words through eye as well as ear. I had read during a portion of Saturday—a little after noon of Sunday I had finished. Of course, this second reading occupied more time than my solitary perusal of the work had done, for the reason that at certain passages I stopped to discourse with my listener.

"It seems very strange to me now," said mamma, "that I could ever have felt disposed to doubt or question the truths of what you have just read. Nor do I think I did. I knew nothing of what this book treats. I had no proper ideas of the church of God. I had studied neither Protestantism nor Catholicity. The former, as a whole, I accepted naturally as the air I breathed; the latter I shrank from, as from fire that would burn and blight. But I have all my life, felt the fearful vacuum in my



nature which my religion could not fill; the incessant, craving hunger which it could not satisfy; the cruel doubts which it could not solve. Our author was a Protestant, he has known it all. If his expositions of Catholicity be correct, we shall find in that old faith a rest—a home. He found it; he rejoices in it, why should not we? A rest—a home! A rest on the rock Christ Jesus—a home in the church of the living God!”

Poor, dear mamma, overcome by emotion, fell to weeping, as usual, violently. This brought on a severe coughing-spell, and soon, ah! me, blood flowed from her mouth! I screamed, I shouted in consternation. Fortunately, Uncle Abner and Aunt Ruth were just entering the gate, on their return from the Methodist church. Uncle Abner ran for the physician, and Ruth for cold water and linen cloths. I stood fast by mamma, whose white face was like the face of the dead. *Was this death?* I said, horrified. Was I about to lose the only friend the wide earth held for me, the only friend, excepting always Selwyn—dear, dear Selwyn?

Dr. Jordan, a positive, stern old gentleman, soon arrived, and, witnessing my nervousness, ordered me out of the room. Catherine had also arrived, and became much distressed at seeing mamma's condition.

“There is no danger,” repeated the doctor, “if you will but be quiet. Women make matters so much worse. There, Mrs. White, you are steady-minded, steady-handed. I elect you my assistant.”



Outside the door Catherine whispered: "Your mother might die. She ought to have the priest. Let me go for him, Miss Myrrha?"

I was sobbing violently through fear and dread, not so much that mamma might die immediately, as that there might be no hope for her final recovery. Catherine's words turned my thoughts into a new channel. I recalled mamma's last words, "A home in the church of the living God!"

When Catherine after a minute again demanded, "Shall I go?" I bowed an assent.

"It was a slight attack—only a slight attack," the doctor was affirming as I entered again the sick-room. "With proper care, I do not anticipate a recurrence; but rest is necessary, and quiet—the utmost quiet. I will call in the morning. Good-day."

Why is it that doctors seem to carry away all the light, and leave only darkness in the sick-room? Why lean we so, poor mortals, upon the frail arm of flesh, missing the divine support we have not faith to seek and find?



## X.



MAMMA was resting quietly upon the bed, her eyes half-closed. She saw me, however, and put forth her hand. I pressed it in both my own, for it was chill, kissed her white lips, and knelt by her side. Uncle Abner leaned against the foot-board, his still moist eyes fastened upon the pallid face of his niece. Aunt Ruth was seeking rest in the easy-chair, her head lying against the back, her eyes closed.

"I am so happy, Myrrha," at length mamma faintly whispered, "I feel so wonderfully at rest. Yet it is not the rest I was speaking of, that is yet to come, to you also as to me. What is that prayer that has this—it keeps running through my mind: 'I adore thee as my first beginning; I aspire after thee as my last end—'?"

"Yes, mamma," I said. "It is in the 'Universal Prayer.' I know it by heart." And I commenced: "'O my God! I believe in thee; do thou strengthen my faith. All my hopes are in thee; do thou secure them. I love thee with my whole heart; teach me to love thee daily more and more. I am sorry that I have offended thee; do thou increase my repentance.'"

"'I adore thee as my first beginning; I aspire after thee as my last end; I give thee thanks as



my constant benefactor; I invoke thee as my sovereign protector.'

" ' Vouchsafe, O my God ! to conduct me by thy wisdom, to restrain me by thy justice, to comfort me by thy mercy, to defend me by thy power.' "

I finished the whole of this comforting petition, this prayer " For all things Necessary to Salvation." At that moment I heard a step, and, glancing outward, my eye caught the tremble of a black robe near me. At the same instant, Catherine from behind touched my shoulder, and I arose upon my feet.

" Father Burke, Miss Myrrha."

Recovering from my confusion, I regained presence of mind sufficient to introduce the stranger to mamma, also to uncle and aunt. At the moment I gave no thought to the surprise and perplexity which must have agitated our kind relatives. My whole anxiety was for mamma, lest she might not countenance the step I had taken. At the mention of Father Burke's name, however, she half-raised her feeble eyes, and gave her hand in welcome.

" You do not object, do you, mamma," I said, " because, when you were so very ill, I allowed Catherine to go for her—minister ?"

Priest was a new word in my vocabulary, and I found I could not speak it, at least in the reverend presence.

" No, dear," she whispered. Then speaking to him: " But I fear I have troubled you to no purpose, I am not quite ready."



With a wave of the hand he dismissed her idea of the trouble; but before he could speak more than a word or two Uncle Abner had aroused himself from his stupor of astonishment.

"I do not know what all this means," he said, in a voice that trembled with suppressed indignation; "but this I do know, that the doctor's orders were for her to be kept utterly quiet, and I protest against this direct opposition to his commands. Or this I am confident, that, if my niece were in her right mind, she would have nothing to say to a man of your cloth, sir!" looking with eyes of fire at the dignified gentleman habited in black.

Aunt Ruth flew to Uncle Abner, grasping him by the arm.

"For heaven's sake, husband, don't make matters worse. You'll be the death of poor Mary, if she gets excited, and has another attack!"

"It is not me that'll be the death of her, then. Faith, I don't know whether we are all in or out of the body. A strange pass it has come to when an emissary—a Catholic priest passes the threshold of my house with impunity! Mary, say but the word that it is not by your wish he is here, and by Judas he shall go out instanter!"

He strode up to mamma's bedside, and bent low to catch her words. I know not what they were, but with a face of flame and an iron tread he left the room. Aunt Ruth gently followed; the discordant elements were gone. Mamma essayed to speak to the priest, but he anticipated her.



"It is better for you," he said, "to make no effort at conversation. In a day or two you will have recovered strength, and I might call again, when should you wish it. Perhaps I can learn from your daughter all it is necessary for me to know."

Mamma beckoned me to draw near.

"Tell him all," she said; "and sit so near me that I may hear without effort." I drew an ottoman by the bedside, and with mamma's hand in mine was ready to speak, yet speak I could not. I felt singularly embarrassed in presence of this reverend stranger, whose odd black gown seemed to fill all the room. "I wish I had never sent for him," I said mentally, as the awkwardness of the silence increased, and became still further augmented by a mental flash of the storm that was to follow his departure, in a reckoning with uncle and aunt.

Father Burke relieved me by saying kindly:

"You need only state to me how long a time you have been seeking these ways new to you, what first drew your attention to them, what progress you have made, that I may see now where you stand."

I glanced upward at Catherine, who was standing on the other side.

"It was all through Catherine, our good Catherine," I found voice to say. And looking at her, the memory of her as she said her rosary on that eventful night came back to me. That was the beginning, and there I commenced my story for Father Burke. In perhaps half an hour it was



done, finished by a repetition of mamma's words at the conclusion of Hecker's *Questions of the Soul*.

Father Burke did not once interrupt me, nor was I so much disconcerted; for as I more than once glanced at him, he seemed to be paying no attention whatever, but rather to be studying intently a vase of flowers that crowned the highest shelf of the whatnot.

"A singular conversion," he said at length, raising his eyes to the ceiling, and letting them drop again upon the vase of flowers. "But God works in his own mysterious ways. And you, both mother and daughter, have especial reason to esteem yourselves as highly favored of God. You cannot, probably, in the course of your life, either of you, recall to mind any good or worthiness of your own by which you have merited the peculiar graces God has given you. It is the work of God—it is marvellous in our eyes. Yet he calls but his own; and you, thrice happy are you that you heeded his call."

"There are various questions which mamma wishes to ask you, and some things upon which she wishes explanations, before—before—"

"Yes, I understand. I will cheerfully give you all the information possible at my next visit, when your mother is able to converse." Mamma pressed my hand.

"Tell him," said she, "about the theory and practice."

"I believe, sir, mamma has some little fear lest



the theory of the Catholic religion prove more beautiful than the practice. This is what her pastor warned her. He assured her that, if she should go into the Catholic Church, she would be glad to get out of it before two years."

"That is contrary to the experience of converts. Of course you must first believe when you go into the church that it is indeed the church of Jesus Christ—that there is no other. You must believe that its Divine Founder gave unto it the Spirit of truth, therefore that it cannot err; that it has stood through almost nineteen centuries, surviving schism and heresies that outgrew and threatened to overcome it; and that it will stand, according to the promise, until the consummation of the world. Firmly grounded in this faith, the teachings and practices of the church will become more and more dear to you. To the lover of Jesus, what so sweet as to do his will, in the way he has appointed! To the soul who has not abandoned his pride and love of the world, the rules of the church may, nay, must, become wearisome and oppressive. For the worldling cannot serve two masters; he will flee the church. Neither can the Christian serve two masters; he will cleave to the church and flee the world. If the supreme wish of one's heart be to follow his Saviour, he will not be appalled or disheartened by the crosses and self-denials he meets, he will the rather embrace and endure them joyfully for the love of God, and for the good of his soul."



He arose as he finished speaking, and came nearer to mamma. I abandoned my seat, going around to Catherine, and with her assumed the attitude of kneeling, following the example of the priest, who, with folded hands uplifted, commenced the Lord's Prayer, to which he added the Hail Mary. This was the first time I had ever heard the Hail Mary repeated.

"Do you have any reluctance to pray to the Blessed Virgin?" enquired Father Burke, as he arose from his knees.

"I believe I have, sir," answered mamma faintly. "I have never thought about it, however. That is one of the points in your religion which I would like to have explained."

"Very well. When shall I come again?"

"I am never very well of mornings. If it is convenient for you, early in the afternoon of to-morrow. Would you please read for me now that prayer for the sick—'O my God, I bow down with my whole soul to adore thee in all thy appointments'?"

Mamma closed her eyes after the priest left, and fell into a quiet sleep without having spoken. I began to think of uncle and aunt, and my thoughts produced anything but a comfortable state of mind. We were guests in their house, and though this was a free country, as was often Uncle Abner's boast, yet I felt an explanation was due them for the unheard-of liberty of introducing one from the kingdom of Antichrist into the house of a good



Christian Methodist—a Methodist who had danced for joy when the brand of an incendiary mob had kindled into flames the Ursuline Convent—a Methodist, sincere and honest too, who had declared it to be a pity that the cloistered inmates had not been reduced to ashes with the fated dwelling. Of what avail could be any word of mine against this iron coat-of-mail—this armor of prejudice?

I found Aunt Ruth reading her Bible, while Uncle Abner was walking up and down the floor, his head slightly bent, his hands crossed behind him, his thumbs twirling one with the other. I went straight up to him, because I knew he would be more difficult to deal with than his wife.

“Dear uncle,” I said, intercepting his rapid pacing by deliberately facing him, “we are so sorry, mamma and I, to have hurt your feelings as we have done to-day. We should soon have informed you of the change in our religious views, and consulted both yourself and Aunt Ruth, but you see mamma’s very sudden attack so shocked and alarmed us, there was no time. I knew that if mamma thought she was going to die, she would wish—she would wish—”

I broke down here and could go no further. Uncle Abner was one of those who cannot stand tears.

“Never mind, Myrrha, child. I see how it is; but the good Lord help me if I can see how it ever came to pass. I can’t believe it. I’m tempted



to fight with my own eyes and ears. The devil has bewitched you, or he has brought into my house a couple of witches in the shape of Mary and her child. Oh! the Lord knows I had rather seen two coffins brought into the south room, and seen poor Mary and Myrrha laid away decently and honorably. O Lord! O good Lord!" And poor Uncle Abner broke into sobs with these last ejaculations. Aunt Ruth laid away her Bible, and, going to her husband, put her arm tenderly about his neck. Trying to steady her own trembling voice, she said, "Don't, Abner, don't, dear. It cannot be helped. It might even be worse."

"How worse, Ruth, how worse?"

"We are getting old in years, Abner. I was thinking in church this forenoon that it is forty-one years to-day since we were married. I thought what happy years they had been, and how few probably were left for us to spend together. Would it not be worse for you, husband, if I were gone, or for me if—if—" She could not speak the dreadful alternative, and her tears with uncle's flowed down together upon their clasped hands; for dear Uncle Abner had drawn Aunt Ruth around and seated her upon his knee, and they leaned their poor sad heads together, and cried in sympathy.

Dear uncle and aunt! I shall never forget the picture they formed, nor the feeling of kindness and reverence they awoke in my heart. As they never had children to share their love, or to divide it, it seemed they became all the more endeared to



one another, and Aunt Ruth's heart was so gentle and kind she had made Uncle's Abner's, naturally rude and rough, almost as tender as her own. I made a movement as if for departure.

"Come here, my little girl," said uncle, putting out his hand to me. "I wouldn't hurt you for the world. Don't feel sorry for what I've said; I'm a cross old bear at best; don't know what would become of me if I hadn't Ruth here to tame me. Well-nigh incorrigible, to be so wild after forty years' training—eh, Ruth? Some day, Myrrha, when I get a little used to it, you must tell me all about it. By Mars! it passes all comprehension."

"If you only knew about that religion," I ventured.

"Knew about it!" And he rolled off Aunt Ruth from his knee, and gesticulated with both hands. "Don't I know about it? What do you know about it?—poor little innocent, born and raised up among the mountains of New Hampshire—God bless 'em! Don't the Bible itself tell us that the Catholic Church is the kingdom of Antichrist—the synagogue of Satan?"

"If you please, uncle, I don't find the word Catholic in the Bible."

"No, that you don't. Well observed, my little lady. Because there was no Catholic Church in Bible times. That was an afterthought, an invention of Satan, devised as an offset and a decoy to the true church. That is why it has always manifested so fierce and cruel a spirit. To cut off Christians'



heads, to burn and torture Christians' bodies, that has been its chief sport. If it had the power here to-day, Myrrha, just as sure as your name is Myrrha Lake, every one of us Protestants would be butchered in cold blood."

"No, no, uncle," I said with a shudder.

"Why do you say 'No, no, uncle?'" he demanded.

"Because it is so contrary to every word and spirit of its religion."

"Its religion! It hasn't any. Like its master, it goes about a roaring lion, seeking whom it may devour. And you, poor little Red Riding-hood—alas! I could weep tears of blood that it has met you in its way."

"But if I rejoice, uncle?"

"Brief will be the day of your rejoicing. It is for your sake I grieve and lament. It will be all very nice for awhile—they are very shrewd, masters of cunning; but let Popery get a good hold of you, and there is no getting out of her clutches, neither for soul nor body. Why, child, you'll be tucked into a convent the first you'll know, and the key will never be turned for you to come out. Just let me see the convent that holds kith or kin of mine—another Ursuline should go into ashes."

I had been revolving a scheme, a bold scheme, for this fierce Protestant's conversion. Hopeless it might prove, but the difficulty was to blind him as to the first steps. I began:

"If my danger is, so great, why do you not seek



to avert it? You are famous as a Methodist exhorter and an expounder of Scripture. Why do you not attempt to convince me that these new ideas of mine are errors?"

"If you have gone so far as to send for the priest the minute you are sick, your case is pretty near hopeless. You must be already reckoned among those whom God gave up to a reprobate mind, that they might believe lies and be damned."

"But you might try. Isn't it your duty? Now, all that mamma and I have learned of the Catholic religion is from books. There are some points which we do not understand. To explain these, the priest is coming to-morrow. Suppose, now, you come in and hear what he will have to say."

"No, Myrrha Lake, I don't sit down at the age of nearly threescore and ten to learn my religion at the feet of a Catholic priest. I was born a Methodist—a Methodist, by the help of God, I will die."

"But, my dear uncle," I said, disguising my real object, or rather tacitly making it to appear a self-concern which I did not really feel, "if you will not be present for your own sake, which I cannot hope, at least ought you not, in spite of your scruples and repugnance, be present for the sake of mamma and myself? You are so much older, more experienced, more versed in Scripture, more capable of combating wily or specious arguments—in fact, you can be our champion, our defender, perhaps our deliverer from pernicious doctrines. We are two weak women, one an invalid, the other—"



"It couldn't do you any harm, Abner," broke in Aunt Ruth, "and it might do Mary and Myrrha a vast deal of good."

"But I don't like the idea of talking with one of these dark-looking priests. I can argue with brother Baxter and brother Biggs, and the like of them, but there's no knowing what tactics this follower of Antichrist will turn to and make use of. If the Evil One is his master, I shall be no match for him."

"But you are on the side of the dear Lord Jesus," suggested Aunt Ruth. Her husband did not reply. Perhaps he was trying to remember if ever, in any one case of argument, he had even seemed to receive divine assistance. I do not know what were his thoughts, but his silence argued favorably.

"I have heard said," he at length resumed, "that these priests have a kind of power—a witch-work like—to make black appear white, and white black. It's best for folks to keep out of their reach."

"You could judge for yourself as to that, if you will but give yourself the opportunity. For our sakes, you know, dear uncle, Aunt Ruth would, of course, be present if you would."

I arose to go back to mamma.

"I'll think of it, and sleep on it, and pray over it. It will go awfully against the grain, but may be it's my duty."

There will be one good thing gained if uncle will but accede to my wish. He will get rid, at least, of some of his prejudice, and I shall have



accomplished a Christian duty. I will ask Catherine to pray for him. The great hope, the great prayer of my heart is for mamma, for her health, for her life.



## XI.



UNCLE seemed quite gay and happy at breakfast.

"I have been fighting away at your priest, Myrrha, all night, both sleeping and waking. I conquered him, too. I assure you, I completely floored him, and he crept away from me in the form of a serpent, which I've no doubt he really is. He couldn't begin to answer my questions, ha—I am not afraid of him—I'll tackle him—I'll show this Bible-burner what my good old Methodist Bible teaches! You shall see, Myrrha, that he won't be able to hold a candle to my arguments—the pretender, the impostor, the hypocrite—you shall see!"

And I *have* seen.

Mamma rested well, and was much better this morning. For myself, I had a restless night. The shadow of a great grief coming hovered around me. It weighed upon my prayers and aspirations—it shut out all the brightness of the world. The light of day, however, and the sight of mamma's more cheerful face, somewhat lightened my heart.

While Catherine was doing up mamma's long beautiful hair, I sat on an ottoman by her feet, chafing her delicate hands with my palm.

"Isn't it strange," I said to Catherine, "that



your minister did not appear to notice, in the least, uncle's rudeness yesterday? I should have supposed it would so offend him that he would never be willing to enter the house again."

"Oh! no, our priests are above taking offence at such things. They are used to them. They expect them. They wouldn't be priests of God if they didn't know how to suffer patiently the insults of the world, and the hard words of heretics. And as to not coming again, you may depend upon it that neither fire nor water would keep Father Burke from his duty of bringing two stray sheep into the fold, if he once knew they were seeking the way and wanted to come. They are sworn to do God's work, let what will come. They are always ready to brave death itself—it isn't likely, then, that they are going to be afraid of a few hot words."

I looked up at the speaker.

"Catherine, would you be a martyr for your religion—would you die rather than to give it up?"

"By the help of God I would," she said energetically. "What would it matter in heaven that my earthly life had been shortened by a few years? You do not know, Miss Myrrha, how I love the names of those who wear now in heaven their crowns of martyrdom."

"I begin to fear that I have done wrong," I said, proceeding to unfold to mamma and Catherine the plan I had arranged of having uncle present at the time of Father Burke's visit.



They were both surprised, and fearful of the result.

"I believe I should not have ventured to propose such a thing had not uncle been in such a tender, melting mood. It occurred to me that if, in such a frame of mind, he could listen to some good Catholic truths, he might be divested of some of his bitter prejudice, even though he might fail to be convinced himself. But if he should be at all rude and boisterous as he was yesterday, I should think I had been the greatest little idiot in the world. What think you, mamma?"

"About your being a 'little idiot'? I should say yes did I not remember that, on many occasions when I have honestly thought thus of you, I had reason before the end to think otherwise. Though it looks dubious, I still hope that in this case I may have to say of you also, 'Wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove.' Don't you think," addressing Catherine, "that we ought to apprise your pastor of what he may have to expect?"

"I don't know, perhaps so."

"Write a note, Myrrha, and let Catherine take it over. There will be no opportunity after he comes for an explanation."

This done, I rested better in my mind, and after reading prayers I read to mamma from St. Paul's Epistles until the bell rang for dinner.

During all the morning, Uncle Abner had been diligently fortifying himself by means of his Bible, Concordance, and *Barnes' Notes*.



Anticipating his hour, he began to speak to me of the delusions, deceits, and snares of Popery, when, becoming alarmed, I ventured to say :

“ I trust, dear uncle, since you are so sure of a victory, that before you wield your battle-axe so powerfully, you will be kind enough to allow the priest to have the first of the argument ; and please, for mamma’s sake, don’t say anything rude. You can be such a gentleman, if you will ; and you know, in argument, those only become angry and abusive who are forced to see the weakness of their cause.”

“ Trust your old uncle, Myrrha, this time. If you look for anybody to get mad, you will have to turn your eyes on that black-gowned priest of yours. I guess the house will be as much too hot for him as it was yesterday too cold—ha, ha !”

After he left the table I said aside to Aunt Ruth :

“ You will be sure to come in with your sewing and sit near to uncle, won’t you ?”

“ Yes, honey ; that is why I have been so busy all the morning — scarcely been in to see poor Mary, the dear ; she looks quite pert ; had no thought she could picked up so since such a spell as that of yesterday. Don’t trouble yourself, Myrrha ; your uncle has promised me, and he always keeps his promise.”

No need of looking out for Aunt Ruth. She is always full of thought, care, and kindness for every one. She never speaks that I do not say over



and over to myself, "That is a dear, sweet Aunt Ruth!"

Mamma ate an unusual amount of dinner, chicken, toast, and jelly. After the remains were cleared away, and she leaned back in her easy-chair, she appeared brighter and better than for many a day.

"I shall not be alarmed at a hæmorrhage if it leaves me so much better," she said cheerfully, half-raising the paralytic lids of eyes that had been beautiful.

I was in a flutter of delight at her unusual brightness.

"She will recover, she will live long, and you will yet be happy," Hope said to me.

How often, the night previous, had I repeated the words of the poet: "The setting of a great hope is like the setting of the sun."

Early after dinner came Father Burke.

We were very glad to see him, in fact, we were prepared to hail him as a messenger of light, but this we could not evince; for he was so distant, so dignified, so cold, although so courteous in manner, that we felt constrained and diffident in his presence. I am sure mamma felt this with me at first, though she is one who can soon put herself at ease under any circumstances. For myself, I should not have felt more in awe of the Grand Mogul; and I secretly congratulated myself that mamma was to-day able to talk, and I could be simply an observer and listener.



He expressed surprise and gratification at mamma's improved condition, and laid upon the table several volumes which he had brought. These he took up one by one, reading the titles, and bestowing upon them severally some remarks.

"Here is a work by Cardinal Wiseman on the Holy Eucharist. This is no doubt one of the subjects upon which your mind is not fully settled?" looking questioningly at mamma.

"It is," she said. "Indeed, that seems to me the most difficult of faith of any in your church. Transubstantiation is a hard word to me, an almost impossible word! I should say I shall never believe it, were I not learning to believe so much that is new that I feel willing to say of whatever may be God's truth, 'I believe—help thou mine unbelief.'"

"I think, madam, you will not only learn to believe this blessed doctrine, but to wonder and regret that you have not always believed it. Though the words of our Lord are so plain, 'This is my body,' 'This is my blood,' that it seems to a believer difficult of misconception, yet as it is by some, even learned persons interpreted figuratively, many books have been written upon it. This work of Cardinal Wiseman's is learned, clear, and diffusive. In truth, it exhausts the subject. These little volumes, *Clifton Tracts*, though simple, are comprehensive, full of instruction, and imbued with the spirit of Christian charity. Milner's *End of Controversy*, though an old work, goes over the



whole ground. Weninger's *Catholicity, Protestantism, and Infidelity* is written expressly for candid Americans—a plain, concise, and unanswerable appeal.”

At this moment entered Aunt Ruth, sewing-basket in hand, followed by the portly form and red face of Uncle Abner.

Each bowed to his reverence; and uncle even graciously entered upon an apology for his yesterday's behavior.

“You see, sir, I was quite taken by surprise. I am rough sometimes—rough as a bear, then I forget that I am a Christian. I am an old man, and ought to know better, but you must excuse me.”

“Excuse you!” said Father Burke heartily, coming across the room and giving his hand; “most certainly, nothing shall be remembered but your kindness of to-day.”

My heart gave a great bound. Surely a gulf had been passed.

“If you have no objections,” said uncle, much mollified, “I would like to hear what you have to say about *your* religion. My niece and her daughter seem to have taken such a liking to it that, if one thing can be said in its favor, I should like to hear it.”

“Very glad to have you, if it be your wish. It is but little, however, that I can say in the limited time I have to spend to-day. During the week, I may be able to spend a portion of another afternoon in the further instruction of those ladies, or, at least, send some one in my place. Meantime, it



will do you no harm to glance at some books I have brought. You know, Mr. White, if one already has the truth, he need not fear losing it by simply acquainting himself with what another conceives to be truth. By the comparison his own may become to him dearer and clearer. What Catholic books have you ever read, sir?"

The sturdy Methodist looked steadily into the face of this representative upholder of Satan's kingdom upon earth, and answered boldly, as if expecting him to wither at his words: "*Fox's Book of Martyrs, Maria Monk, Six Months in a Convent, Romanism at Home, Priest and Nun, Almost a Priest, Almost—*"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted the priest, endeavoring vainly to smother a smile; "those are not Catholic books; those are the most thoroughly Protestant books in the world!"

Uncle's face grew a tinge more red. He was successful in conquering his wrath, and there came no explosion. Before he could command his voice, the priest continued:

"Who do you suppose write Catholic books, Catholics or Protestants?"

"Why, Catholics ought to write their own books, I should think."

"Exactly; and do you think a Catholic would write any one of those books you have mentioned?"

"He might, if they were true. History don't lie."



"Did you ever, in reading those books, pause for a moment to enquire if they might not be false?"

"No; I believe I never did."

"You took them for gospel truth. Yet were they works of fiction the most damnable ever written. Through ignorance, hatred, and malice, written for gain and notoriety. Would a Protestant write a book so condemnatory of his sect? Not sooner would a Catholic. You did not stop to think about it. Had you done so, in a Christian spirit, you could but have seen the inconsistency of ascribing to the largest class of Christians on earth vices at which the world shudders. The Catholic has faith in God, in the blessed Trinity, in a risen Saviour, in a judgment to come, in heaven, in hell. Why, then, may it not be supposed that he should fear to do evil, and learn to do good?"

"How can your people know how to do good, or how to shun evil, since they know nothing about the Bible? It is enough for me to know about the Catholic Church to know that the priests don't allow the common people God's holy Word!"

"Are you sure that that is the case?"

"Sure! Of course, everybody knows it. Nobody pretends to deny it."

"I beg leave to speak," said my mother. "My good Catherine has been always a Catholic. She has a Bible that was her mother's, given to that mother by an uncle who was a priest in Ireland, the land of Catholics."



“The church, Mrs. Lake,” said Father Burke, “is the interpreter of Scripture. She recommends the reading of the Holy Scriptures, but she disallows private interpretation. It is this liberty of private judgment that has multiplied sects indefinitely. The church is older than the New Testament. Our Saviour taught his doctrine by word of mouth. He nowhere commanded a written word. He said to his Apostles, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.’ We find no precept given to the Apostles to disseminate the Scriptures, after having them translated into all languages. No intimation is ever given therein of the duty of ministers to provide copies of the sacred volume for those whom they are bound to instruct. If this dissemination of the written word was and is an essential part of Christianity, and if in Scripture alone is to be found the rule and criterion of all that is essential, how comes this important provision to be there omitted?”

Uncle Abner ventured to speak:

“Our Lord plainly says: ‘Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life.’”


“Yes, truly he does. To whom does he speak? To the Jews, who were to find in Scripture the prophecies of the Messiah. What Scriptures does he mean? Clearly the old, for the new was not then written. It happened that, as churches increased, divisions arose, and as it was not always convenient for the Apostles to adjust difficulties in person, they wrote



epistles containing doctrine, reproof, exhortation, etc. These, after the lapse of many years, were collected together, and with the Gospels form what is since called the New Testament. Had they, however, been intended for the *rule of faith* of the church, would not such a specification have been somewhere hinted at? On the contrary, the church was first formed, taught, governed. The epistles, written by inspiration, refer only to these teachings, rules, and practices. They do not profess to teach the church—the church, through them, is reiterating certain of her counsels to her children. Had our Lord intended the Holy Scriptures to be every individual Christian's rule of faith, would he not have provided a way by which the mass of Christians could have become singly acquainted with it? How many of the poor and ignorant early Christians ever looked upon the inspired manuscripts? To whom was it given to teach and to preach? Clearly, to the ministers of the church. Who was to listen, receive, and obey? Clearly, the members of the church. For St. Paul expressly declares, 'Whosoever will not hear the church, let him be unto thee as the heathen and publican.' Elsewhere he declares the church to be 'the pillar and the ground of truth.' "



XII.

“T all events, parson,” broke in the attentive Methodist, “the Bible will do for me.”

“You think so, doubtless. It may do for you. But what did it do for the vast multitude of Christians who lived during the fourteen centuries before the art of printing? Not one in hundreds could read and write, much less read writing. You forget that all the Holy Scriptures, every volume, was written by hand, and required the labor of years for its transcription. You pay a dollar for your Bible, without even thinking that during so many hundred years a Bible would have cost many hundreds of dollars, much more than most Christians were worth. A Bible was so precious in those days that it was sometimes chained to a desk in the church or monastery to prevent its being stolen or misused.”

“You don’t say that is the reason that they used to chain Bibles?” quoth Uncle Abner, with very large, earnest eyes.

“The sole reason. They chained Bibles to keep and preserve them. If you have a precious treasure in your house, you guard it with care, particularly if your house is obliged to be open to the world, as was the case with the monasteries, which were the



principal depositories of the Holy Scriptures. You see now why the common people could not have a copy of them. They were not only utterly unable to purchase them, but equally so to read them. Can you not see the injustice of charging the church with keeping from the people the Word of God ?”

Uncle Abner was becoming interested ; he spoke again.

“ How is it, though, about your burning the Bible ?”

“ Do you remember that it says somewhere in your ‘ Good Book,’ Whosoever addeth to or taketh from, let him be accursed ?”

“ Yes ; and whoever burns it, what ought to become of him ?”

“ Can you tell me how long a time has elapsed since your Reformation ?”

“ Something considerable over three hundred years, I believe.”

“ And how long since Jesus Christ founded his church ?”

“ Why, I believe we are living in the nineteenth century.”

“ What do you suppose became of the Bible during the other fifteen centuries ?”

“ I suppose God had it hidden away somewhere. He would not suffer his holy Word to be destroyed.”

“ No ; he would not suffer it to perish. But it was preserved by Catholic hands, in Catholic hearts. Many and many a noble Catholic Christian, in an-



swer to the demand of the messenger of some cruel emperor to give up his Bible or his life, replied fearlessly, 'God's Word have I hidden where you cannot find it; here is my life, take it.' You will find in one of these little books," taking up one of the *Clifton Tracts*, "instances of this kind: 'St. Felix preferred to meet death by falling upon the sword rather than to betray the hiding-place of his precious book of God. At each anniversary of his martyrdom, October 29, every Catholic remembers and honors him.' What Protestant has even heard of St. Felix?"

"Why, then, should Catholics ever come to hate and burn the Bible?"

"I am coming to that. The Catholic loved his Bible, he loves it still. But it is his Bible, the whole Bible, the whole Word of God, that he loves. The authors of Protestantism took considerable portions of the Catholic Bible, altered and translated them anew to suit their new faith, and called it 'The Bible.' It is indeed *their* Bible. We cannot take it as *the Bible*, because it is not the original Catholic Bible, the unaltered, unabridged Word of God. We *do* forbid our people to make use of the Protestant Bible. Protestant Bibles MAY have been burned by Catholics, not however because they were Bibles, but because, pretending to be the inspired Word, they were not."

"All I have to say is, that if the Catholic Church don't hate and attempt to destroy the Bible, then she has been mightily belied, and some of us awfully



deceived," said my uncle warmly, who had naturally become the disputant, instead of mamma or myself.

"The Catholic Church not love and esteem the Word of God! Is there any other church that places a heavier stake on the authority of the Scriptures than the Catholic? Is there any other church that pretends to base so much of rule over men on the words of that book? Is there any one, consequently, that has a greater interest in maintaining, preserving, and exhibiting that Word? For those who have been educated in that religion know that, when the church claims authority, it is on the Holy Scriptures that she grounds it; and is not this giving it a weighty importance beyond what any other church will attempt?"

"I suppose there is one thing you won't pretend to deny, that yours has been a dreadfully persecuting church?"

Uncle was evidently casting about for rebutting testimony. It was amusing to witness his air of confidence. Surely he had the priest now!

"Not so very dreadful," said Father Burke with a smile. "It is true, one cannot but regret whatever persecution has emanated from the church. Much attributed to her, however, does not lie at her door, but is due to the civil government under which she existed."

"But there is the Inquisition, sir. Or will you undertake to say that there was never such an institution? I hope that was not an invention of Protestantism?"



"The Inquisition did exist. It was established, however, by the Spanish Government, not by the church."

"But the church upheld it. Priests turned the thumbscrews, and they or their hirelings plied the rack and torture."

"I will not now go into an argument over that point. It would occupy much time, and require many details. But I will bring you Count De Maistre's work on the subject, comprising statements and well-authenticated facts that will surprise you. You must keep in mind that there are often two sides to so-called history, as to ordinary stories."

"You are now upon the very subject I wished to hear discussed," observed mamma. "And I would like to know why it is that Protestantism, which professes such purity, should be, to this day, so stained with the sin of slander against her which she cannot but admit to have been her own mother?"

"You must perceive, Mrs. Lake," said the priest, "that, if Protestantism is right, Catholicity is wrong. If Catholicity is right, then Protestantism is more than a wrong, it is a crime; for she excuses her existence and maintains her position by a constant repetition of the basest calumnies. This her very nature obliges her to do. The moment she comes out and says, 'The Catholic Church is a church of God,' she condemns herself. For her own rule of faith, her Bible, commands her to hear and obey the church. Therefore, true to her name, she *protests* first, last, and always, that the church is Antichrist,



guilty of every crime, folly, and abomination. She was born into the world a Protestant—a rebel; such she remains, her children divided into numberless factions, contending about words and names, with no bond of union, without authority or discipline. Like a flock of sheep without a shepherd, they appear at present rushing headlong down the precipice at whose base lies the gulf of infidelity. Not that I think Protestantism holds no Christians. My opinion is quite the reverse. But I speak of it as a whole.”

“How has it happened, sir, that, if Protestantism is wrong, it has been allowed such growth and extension?” asked mamma.

“Protestantism,” the priest replied, “is not the first heresy with which the church has had to contend. Arianism, in an early age of the church, was as widespread and deeply-rooted. Indeed, it outgrew and threatened the annihilation of the church. To human vision, the vine of God’s planting was about to perish. But Christ’s promise, woven with her existence, ensured her triumph. It was only after the lapse of centuries that that most formidable heresy disappeared—to be renewed in our own day in the form, somewhat modified, of Unitarianism. Pelagianism, Monothelitism, in short, an infinite number of “isms,” have assailed her since that period. Often has she been so assaulted, so pelted and battered by the missiles of Satan, that the world, pointing her finger of scorn, has said: ‘Behold, her end is at hand.’ But, true to the everlasting pro-



mise, always has she emerged from each fiery furnace with renewed brightness, elasticity, and vigor. Had it been possible for the gates of hell to have prevailed, she would long since have sunk under the accumulation of calumny, ridicule, oppression, and the strong arm of unlawful, arbitrary power. Never was her downfall so hopefully prophesied as in the time of, and following, Luther's reformation. But never before has she shone more brightly than since. And though it was divinely said of her, 'She shall be everywhere spoken against,' the fiercest words fall harmlessly from her buckler, for her buckler is of steel—the steel of Truth."

"And have you faith to believe that Protestantism, like Arianism, will ultimately disappear?" queried mamma incredulously.

"Assuredly I have. I could not believe otherwise and still preserve my faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. He established his church. He gave to it the Spirit of truth. He promised to be with her to the consummation of the world. Is Protestantism that church, of which no one ever heard until more than fifteen centuries after her Divine Founder had arisen from the dead? Had I but Protestantism upon which to ground my faith, I should have no faith; I should be an infidel. It is to the church of Christ, the church of the Apostles, the universal church, to which I cling; otherwise to none."

"I should really like to know how, first, churches and people got split up in the way they are," said uncle, very serious.



"Because," replied the priest gravely, "of the pride of men's hearts. Because of disobedience. The Holy Scriptures command us to 'hear the church, which is the pillar and the ground of truth.' Is it not a little singular that Protestants, who declare the Bible to be their rule of faith, entirely disobey this injunction? They refuse to hear the church, to whom was given the authority to teach, preferring to go in their own ways; is it to be wondered at that they stray in so many different paths, each with his Bible in his hand, one saying, 'Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.' Another insisting, 'Answer a fool according to his folly, lest—' So long as Christians are willing to obey that one injunction, Hear the church, they will not go astray."

"But if the church should happen to go astray?" questioned uncle.

"She cannot; for to her is given the Spirit of truth. Wherefore the injunction to obey her if she could err? You see the inconsistency."

"But your church don't always teach one and the same thing, does she?"

"Always the same. The same that Jesus Christ taught."

"But he never taught that people should worship his mother instead of himself."

"No; nor does the church teach it, nor has she ever taught it."

"What does she teach about that? I'd just like to know."



"You are aware that the sayings and acts of Christ and his Apostles are not all recorded?"

"Yes; John says, if they were written, the whole world couldn't contain the books."

"Very well. As our church dates back to that very time, she treasures with jealous care and veneration the traditions having reference to those unwritten acts. Not that only; but she remembers and perpetuates all the practices of those early Christians. One of these practices was veneration of the Blessed Virgin. Cannot you imagine that the mother of our Divine Lord must have been particularly loved and honored by his disciples, by all who believed in him? That, even after his ascension and her assumption, she must have been remembered with the same devotion? What more natural that a Christian who has sinned, feeling his unworthiness, should invoke the mother to plead for him with her Son? He asks her not to pardon him, but to intercede as a mediator. Just as a criminal, who scarcely dare hope for mercy, begs the favorite of the king to add his petition to his own, and plead for him. It is not such worship as we pay to God, but a special veneration justly due to her whom God has favored above all creatures."

"Well, there's some reason in that. But there's no sense in praying to saints."

"It is on the same grounds, and in the same sense. Had I time, I could establish this by examples from Scripture. Holy men, men who were dearly beloved and favored of God, naturally be-



come dear to holy men who live after them. God granted them gifts and graces on earth : will he not more abundantly grant them gifts in heaven ? If the prayers of the righteous availed below, will they not prevail above ? Suppose your father dies a devout Christian. You remember his example ; you are almost in despair that you imitate him so little. Dropping to your knees, you cry : ‘ O my father ! who lived so near unto God, whose prayers must have been to him so acceptable, pray for me ! Unite with the blessed saints and angels who surround God’s throne, and obtain for me that God may be merciful unto me a sinner.’ You place yourself, as it were, amidst a kneeling throng of suppliants ; you have more courage thence to address your petition unto the Supreme Father.”

I believe we all drew a long breath. Uncle Abner looked over at me with something like a puzzled expression :

“What did I tell you this morning, Myrrha, about certain persons making black appear white, and white black ?”

“Oh ! I suspect it should be this way : they make black appear white, because the black was to them, and really, white all the time. It is doubtless the unbeliever who sees through the false medium.”

“I see no chance for my big guns. Your line of argument, parson,” said uncle, turning to the priest—why *would* he call him parson ?—“is al-



together out of my beat. You are a very good smoothing-iron, sir, but there's many a Protestant wrinkle in me yet. What about your putting everybody into convents, whether they will or no?"

"That is as untruthful as all the rest. The very absurdity of the thing might prove to you its falsity."

"By Mars! if you don't contradict everything! Why, you must believe us Protestants to be a pretty set of blackguards! What *do* you think of us, anyhow?"

"I leave you to infer that we think the supporters of a cause must be aware of its desperate condition when they seek to uphold it by calumny and falsehood."

"But I suppose you will admit that I have a right to choose which I shall believe—yourself, or the whole Protestant Church?"

"I am one of the Church Catholic; you are one of the Protestant sect. Shall Mrs. Lake and her daughter, here present, believe what I say of my church, or shall they believe what you say of it? Understand me. I do not say that your word of honor is not as good as mine. But I speak of what I know by actual knowledge; you, in speaking of the church, speak only by hearsay, and that hearsay from the mouths of enemies."

"But, sir, I have lived here among Catholics for the last forty years; why have I not known something of this before?"

"I suppose you can answer that question better



than myself. Although I am at no loss for an answer. Did you ever make inquiry at the proper source, nay, would you this day be listening to my voice, if circumstances, beyond your control, had not, in a measure, forced you to do so? If, from your earliest childhood, your parents had told you you must never go near a certain room, it contained a frightful creature that would devour children, do you not suppose that room would have been carefully avoided by you? The bugbear tale had been told to your father, and to his father before him: each and all fully and innocently believed in it. All at once, somehow, from somewhere comes mysteriously a whisper that possibly, after all, no such creature inhabits that room. Impossible, you say. My fathers had not a doubt of it: I have had no doubt of it. But that faint whisper of doubt keeps your curiosity astir. There is no rest nor peace of mind until the door of that room is opened, when no monster-creature appears! You blame not yourself nor your father for this life-long delusion; but surely some one is to blame. You lose your faith in that 'some one' of a past age, however much you may have heard him extolled. You wonder you had not sooner thought to have examined for yourself. You wonder how your father could have lived until death the victim of such a delusion. So it is with regard to your never having sought to inform yourself as to the church. 'Habit is second nature'; only a shock can send it out of its course."



XIII.



BELIEVE I fell asleep while making my last entry. I had nearly finished, however; and to-day a circumstance has happened which will furnish for my diary an entirely new leaf. Who should surprise us this morning but Selwyn! We had not expected him until after he graduated next June. But he received a letter from his father, Dea. Everett, informing him, on the authority of Mr. Wells, that both mamma and myself were doubtless on the eve of becoming Papists. It seemed to him utterly incredible, for I had never referred to the subject in my weekly letters. Yet the idea so oppressed him that he resolved on a flying visit from Yale to Charlestown.

We have been engaged several years, almost since we were children, and nothing but gentle words ever passed between us. Who could have foreseen so stormy an interview as this of to-day? Shall I drop my pen and leave it to pass into oblivion? Surely it will never fade from my memory. I had no idea that Selwyn would have taken the fact of my conversion so much to heart. He is by no means religiously inclined; and I flattered myself, vain maiden that I am, that his affection for me was so full and sincere that it would survive any possible change of time or circumstance. He



accused me of duplicity in that for several months my mind had been given to a subject—and *such* a subject—which I was unwilling or ashamed even to speak to him in a single letter! I admitted that it did indeed look strange, and naturally must seem to him unaccountable. Yet I explained it on the true ground, that I at first attached slight importance to it, and deemed it would have for him no interest; that even as the subject gained upon my attention, as there was no certainty or even probability that it ever would affect any outward religious change, I would not needlessly agitate his mind. Still, afterward it had assumed such proportions that I fancied it could not be written, it must be told, and I had waited to tell him by word of mouth. Vain excuses all, which he would not accept. Would he have kept from me, he questioned, a subject of such magnitude as must have so fully engrossed the mind? No; I must have known that the idea would be repugnant to him, that he would never approve of it, that he would never submit to it, and now even I was to abandon all thought of that outlandish heathenism, falsely called religion, or our engagement of marriage was ended then and there! I was then to choose between Selwyn and my religion: the latter I would not give up—Selwyn, how could I?

“If you would but read a few books,” I began.

He fiercely interrupted me:

“That I never will—never—so help me God! I will never meddle with the abomination; it must



be a stench in the nostrils of any decent man. How you can be so deluded is beyond human comprehension. I should not have thought the very Evil One could have so seduced your good sense. And your mother, too! Good heavens! What a couple of monomaniacs!"

Thus he went on. What should I say? Above all things I would keep my temper. I would say nothing to be afterward sorry for. And truly I was grieved—not angry. I had had no experience with angry men; this was the only masculine ebullition with which I have had to deal. I kept silence, resolving no word of mine should add fuel to the flame, and by-and-by it went out, not in smoke and ashes, but in a shower of tears. Then I forgave him every bitter word. A woman may cry every day, and what of it? But when a strong man weeps, you may know that the iron has entered his soul. . . .

When Selwyn left, it was with this understanding. He will carry out his intention of graduating in June, and spend the following two years in foreign travel. If at the termination of that period I shall have seen the folly of my ways, and forsaken the church which I am soon to enter, he will be ready to fulfil his engagement of marriage. If I still should adhere to my delusion, why, he would never marry a Catholic—never. Why did I not say, like a woman of spirit—Go; a Catholic is too good for you; I will see your face no more. But I did not say it. I had come to have great faith in prayer to God.



I said mentally, while he continued talking, "I will pray for him, and by the grace of God he shall yet become a Catholic."

Therefore, when he said at parting: "I have the utmost faith in your judgment, reason, and good sense—these will ultimately assert their reign, and you will be Myrrha Lake, *my* Myrrha Lake again."

"Always Myrrha Lake—but first, last, and always true to her conscience and her God! Do not forget that every day I shall pray for you, Selwyn."

He replied only by a prolonged, surprised look of doubt and inquiry, and was gone!

He had tarried but two hours—gone so soon. It was morning, now it is night; and all the day I have said over and over: "Yes, he is gone; he is gone!" And, God forgive me, I have dared to ask, Is the gain worth the sacrifice? And still there is such a hope in my heart, such an expectation I may say, that Selwyn Everett shall seek and find the true faith. Selwyn's mother has always said of him, he was born under a happy star. His bachelor uncle, a sea captain, requested he should bear his name, and, dying, bequeathed to him a considerable fortune. Success attended everything to which he touched his hand or gave his attention. He was precocious, and old of his years. He showed early, among his playmates, that he was one born to rule; not from an exercise of physical force, but by that moral power to which inferior natures involuntarily yield. The good deacon, his father, the deacon's wife, and their five daughters,



all look up with a kind of deference to this only son of their house. He is but twenty-three years of age; yet he scarcely ever receives a letter from home that his opinion is not consulted, even upon trivial affairs.

And I, so long-timed his affianced, had actually for months meditated, and finally resolved upon a momentous move, without so much as saying to him a word about it. What wonder his pride was wounded, his dignity offended? I marvel now myself at it; except that, as I did not speak of it at the beginning, the time for speaking of it seemed never to come.

Mamma says she does not wonder at his surprise—nay, at his indignation. She says we have only to look back at ourselves to see what must be his opinion of our views. She thinks I did right not to answer him with words of anger; that now we must expect the crosses, self-denials, and persecutions which Christ said the Christian should meet, and that we must patiently bear them. It seems she has all along foreseen this rupture, and been depressed on account of it. But truly she says, our God is good, we can safely put our trust in him. Mamma is really better for this day or two.



## XIV.

**S**INCE the day before yesterday, when Uncle did *not* have his battle with the priest, I have until to-day vainly endeavored to discover the state of his mind. True, I have scarcely seen him except at meals; then he is very taciturn, which is quite unlike himself. I ventured to ask Aunt Ruth privately what Uncle thought of the priest's remarks.

"He won't talk much about it," she replied, "but he thinks the more. Haven't you missed one of the books that your minister brought? I was out at the hen-house an hour ago, and what should I see but your uncle in the barn, sitting in a sunny place on the hay, so buried in that book that he neither saw nor heard me. Let him alone, child, just let him alone; the Lord will lead him wherever he intends him to go."

"And what do you think, Aunt Ruth?"

"Oh! I don't pretend to think one way or another. I was brought up a Quaker; but when I married your uncle I became what he was, a Methodist. I have always thought, if one's heart was right in God's sight, it didn't so much matter what people called themselves; but I don't know. I thought everything stood to reason that that



Catholic gentleman said; but, then, I am no judge. I always thought the women had better let the men decide upon such things. You know St. Paul says, 'Let the women keep silence, and learn of their husbands at home.' They have enough besides to think of—washing, ironing, cooking, mending, pickling, preserving, sweeping, dusting, besides tending flowers, and visiting the sick."

"Then you are going to let uncle think for you?" smiling to myself.

"Yes; I'm sure the Lord won't let him go wrong now in his old age. He has tried to serve him faithfully all his life, though he has a quick temper, and, if he makes him change now, I shall think it is for the better. And if he changes, I shall. We sha'n't separate at this late day, especially sha'n't the love of God separate us."

One might think from this speech of Aunt Ruth that she was somewhat simple in mind. If exceeding sweetness of disposition and thorough goodness of heart constitute simplicity, then was Aunt Ruth simple. Doubtless the strong-minded women of the present age would toss their noses at her with contempt, as they would for St. Paul if they could, and as they do at his doctrine. I sometimes wonder if these woman's-rights women will rest calmly in their coffins at the last; if they won't fling apart their folded hands, and pour forth from their pallid lips violent protests against being laid away in caskets made by masculine hands, and having clay shovelled over them by the strong



arms of man. So little can be associated with them an idea of rest—peace.

I discovered the missing book to be *Milner's End of Controversy*. Uncle's mind, though untrained by education of the schools, and fettered by prejudice, is still capable of comprehension, and can pretty well appreciate a train of argument. I had not even hoped for such readiness as this. "It is the work of God, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

I felt unusually cheerful to-day at dinner. My conversation with aunt had opened for me such a happy surprise. I wished to speak seriously to uncle, but, remembering his wife's injunction "to leave him alone," I desisted. At length he himself broke the silence.

"I told you, Myrrha," he began, in no gracious tone of voice or manner, "that folks would do well to keep out of the reach of those 'black gowns.' You know how the serpent charms the bird? That is their power right over again."

"Say, rather, uncle, it is the truth they present which fascinates you."

"It is all the same thing. If I had kept out of his way, I should have been bothered neither with him nor his truth, as you call it."

"Think of mamma and myself. We became 'fascinated' without the aid or intervention of any priest. We had only books; and one a poor little ragged thing at that."

"I tell you again, it is all the same thing. Who



writes their books? Priests, don't they? They bewitch everything they touch, especially if a heretic is around."

"But they cannot always be sure that a book will fall into the hands of a heretic."

"They can suppose so, and suppose right, too. I tell you I would give a thousand dollars if—if I had never—but he will find out that I am not going to be caught so easily. I'm not going to be fooled by smooth words, nor have the wool pulled over my eyes, at my time of life. No, by Jericho!" And he brought down his fist with such force upon the table as to endanger the integrity of china and glass.

Aunt Ruth looked up mildly, and spoke as mild: "Don't get excited, Abner. I don't believe anybody wants to convince you against your will; and I am very sure they will not if they try. You always had a mind of your own; I can testify to that."

Uncle did not answer; but, with remarkable swiftness, thrust into his mouth huge pieces of steak and bread, as if he had eaten nothing for a twelvemonth.

I commenced diligently to inquire of Aunt Ruth how she made the delightful pudding she had just dished out for me. She launched forth into a full list of ingredients; and from this turned to wedding-cake, which brought her to her own bridal cake of forty years ago, than which, she assured me, none could be richer, or for a longer time kept moist



and good ; for a loaf of hers had been kept seventeen years, and you hardly would know but it was baked yesterday. Under cover of this brisk conversation, in which *my* attention at least seemed particularly engaged, uncle swallowed hastily his pudding, and withdrew — actually to the barn, to his sunny seat on the hay, to his book ! I shall not write, even on this page, how I came to know it for certain.

I went back to mamma, and narrated it all to her, as well as my prior conversation with Aunt Ruth.

“ Poor, dear Uncle Abner,” she said, as if speaking to herself, “ what a struggle he will have ! God help him ! ”

This afternoon I have been reading the *Holy Eucharist*, by Cardinal Wiseman. It might be inquired whether this be a book exactly suited to the comprehension of a girl in her teens. It is not expected, of course, that I should be able to decide upon the correctness of his Hebraic or Syriac translations ; like the multitude of readers, I am to take for granted the assertions of one who may be supposed to take a laudable pride in his literary veracity, as in his profound erudition.

“ Who is to decide when doctors disagree ? ” It seems that the most distinguished commentator, Adam Clarke I believe, had given the Protestant world an emotion of triumph by stating that our Saviour was obliged to make use of the expression, “ *This is my body,* ” inasmuch as there was no word in



the Syrian language signifying "to represent" which could take the place of *is*. Our author, Cardinal Wiseman, examined into the truth of this statement. In the dictionary for English use he found no such word, it is true. In a close study, however, of the principal literary works of the language, he found *forty-one* words synonyms of our word "represents." Truly, to be wise, it is good; to be wiser, is better; to be wisest, most excellent of all.

I wonder if I understand thoroughly, or rightly at all, this argument, which made upon me the deepest impression of any. He says, in substance, that his disciples could not have understood their Lord in a figurative sense, for this reason: In the language by him employed, and to them familiar, the expression *to eat my flesh* was not uncommon; its universal signification, however, was "to reproach," "to calumniate." Therefore they could not have accepted, any more than he could have designed, this figurative sense. How many pages are filled, and what learning and ability employed, in disquisitions upon this solemn subject; when, after all is said, as mamma observed, it stands out simple and grand upon the inspired page in the words of our blessed Lord, "This is my body; This is my blood."

If Christ intended it literally, and still we take it in the Protestant sense, how infinitely do we lose! If he intended it figuratively, of what, after all, can the Catholic be accused, but of following his dear Lord too closely, and of adhering to the letter as




well as to the spirit of his word? This was to us a striking suggestion which weighed vastly for a literal interpretation. The Protestant belief is that Christ is present in spirit at the Holy Communion; present somewhere, in the heart at least. Catholics, it seems, believe he is spiritually and bodily present in the consecrated bread and wine. In either sense, what solemnity surrounds it! It seems to me that in the one, relying on the mercy and merits of him whom we hold in remembrance, we may dare become partakers in the communion of Love; that, in the other, nothing but purity itself should kneel before it. That, like the heathen poet of old, before touching his household gods, he must have "bathed his hands in pure water," his heart and soul in that "fountain which cleanses from all sin"; and by fasting and prayer to feel conscious, as it were, that his soul was indeed a "fit temple for the Holy Spirit to dwell in."

Sitting here in the silence of my chamber, I feel how incapable I am of judging upon a subject of so solemn significance; yet have I need to ponder all these things in my heart.



XV.

 HIS morning came uncle into our pleasant south room. Mamma was sitting up, arrayed in a crimson cashmere dressing-gown, upon which fell the warm spring sunshine, reflecting a bright glow upon her sunken cheek.

“Better to-day, Mary?” said uncle.

“Perfectly comfortable just now, thank you,” she replied, watching him as he laid upon the table the *End of Controversy* which he had so surreptitiously taken.

“A wonderful book—wonderful,” he remarked, seeing himself observed, “but a man is not obliged to believe everything he reads; some writers, though, have a great way of twisting up things—now, this Milner has, at least, a thousand threads which he calls proof, out of which he makes a big rope, this he swings out like a lasso, and before you know you are caught—likely as not, and not as likely. Faith, it is not, as likely, in my case. I am too old to be learning new things. If I had read that book in my young days, say forty or more years ago, there is no knowing what might have happened.”

“Then you don’t wonder so much at Myrrha and your deluded niece?”

“Can’t say as to that. Think it a thousand pities,



though, that you ever turned out of the old track—that you ever saw one of these old-fangled books. It is better to live and die in the faith one is born.”

“If the Reformers had held to that doctrine, uncle, there would be no need for us to turn back seeking the faith they remorselessly left.”

“That is so. They did turn their backs upon the faith they were born in. I never thought of that. But then the old church had become so corrupt.”

“I suspect it was just about as are the churches of the present day. Look about for yourself, uncle. You find those even in your own church who do not lead Christian lives, and who are a scandal to religion. People of the world say often: ‘No better state of morals prevail in than out of the church.’ Would this be sufficient reason for you to come out and establish a society of your own, which you call a church? Does not our Saviour say the tares shall grow with the wheat? No matter what new society may be formed, aiming at a higher state of morals, unworthy persons will soon form a part; for human nature is ever the same; the hypocrite assumes the garb of sanctity, and evil ones deceive the very elect.”

“Yes, I read in that book, over there, that although Jesus knew Judas was a fallen disciple, yet he allowed him to be of the twelve up to the last moment. He left him to settle with God his own account, thereby setting an example that the church should not be surprised or disheartened when she



finds among her children those who prove traitors and criminals. I never thought of that before. If Peter had come out and said—though Peter couldn't say much—he had denied his Master; but supposing John or Thomas had come out and said, 'I won't go with the others, they nourished Judas in their midst; they are as bad as he was; I am better than they; I will form a new company.' That would be doing as the Reformers did—but I don't know, I never thought anything of all this before—my head is almost too old to think about it now. But it does appear to me as if a great mistake had been made some time, by somebody, and that the church should never been split up in this way. It has been permitted by the Lord, and we've nothing to say."

"So has sin ever been permitted since the age of Adam. Still, is it not our duty to speak everywhere and at all times against it?"

During this conversation, Father Burke was announced. "He had come," he said, "for an hour or two in the morning, as he was to be otherwise engaged for the afternoon." He brought the promised book on the Inquisition, and several other works on the persecutions under the various Protestant reigns, particularly under that of Elizabeth.

"That is a great stain against your church," said uncle, in a tone a good deal more subdued than that of a few days ago. "Her cruel persecutions show that she was animated by a very bad spirit."

"Persecution, from whatever source," replied the



priest, "has been due to the spirit of the age, rather than to the spirit of the church. There has been no more persecution among Catholics than among Protestants, nor so deadly and long-continued."

We were all surprised, and uncle fairly rose to his feet.

"You cannot believe what you say, with that cruel Inquisition staring you in the face, and all the frightful history of the past to prove that you are mistaken."

Father Burke smiled: "I affirm nothing of which I have not abundant proof at hand—history from both Catholic and Protestant sources. Both prove the spirit of pure, unmixed persecution to have been more bitter with the Protestants than with the Catholics. You have read only of Catholic persecution. In these books, read a tale of Protestant persecution, that will fully convince you of the truth of my statement."

Uncle settled back in his chair, refraining from utterance of what was upon his tongue, and listened attentively as the priest directed his conversation to mamma. In answer to his inquiry of the results of her reading, she informed him that she had listened with great satisfaction to the reasoning and expositions of Cardinal Wiseman, and that upon that vexed question she had become satisfied that she could believe it, and, with all her heart, wished to believe it. "And, now that that most difficult of all subjects is disposed of, I feel as



though I can believe all else that the church teaches, whether now acquainted with it or not."

"That is the point for you to come to, madam. It was sufficient for you to have believed simply that the church was Christ's Church, with divine authority to teach. With a full belief in this, the rest is easy and natural. Converts, however, have usually to go over the whole ground of doctrine before they can become convinced. All at once it dawns upon them, 'Why, I might not have studied and questioned thus long; enough for me to know that it is the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church, divinely guarded from error, commissioned to teach the truth unto all nations.' This, in the primitive ages of the church, was nearly all that catechumens were privileged to know. And if you are convinced, what then?"

"I wish to be received into the church."

"This is Thursday. Have you been out-of-doors yet?"

She had not; but Doctor Jordan had, only the day before, recommended a daily drive, which had to-day been proposed to her. With her usual disinclination to exercise, she had deferred until the morrow. It was finally settled that, Sunday week being Easter—though we know nothing about Easter as yet—if between now and then mamma could gain sufficient strength, we should on that day receive baptism at the church. And may God give unto us fulness of love and perfection of faith! May it prove unto us a baptism of water



and of the Spirit. So buried with Christ in baptism, that we may rise with him to newness of life.

This is the first week during Selwyn's college course that I have had from him no letter. He did not say he should not write; it was reasonable to suppose, however, that our correspondence was at an end. And yet, when the usual day came, and without a letter, I knew how strong had been the hope of one—to myself but half acknowledged. It is better thus. I will remember to pray for him; otherwise endeavor to forget him. Impossible! Not impossible the endeavor, and it must be made. Have I known no temptation since "having put my hand to the plough to turn back"? Does not this clinging to an unpopular religious faith dissolve every hope of happiness, humanly considered? It demands the sacrifice of the one love of my girlhood, the betrothed of my womanhood, and I have but a human heart—O my God! only a human heart—have thou pity upon me! For there are times when affection pleads, when reason is overcome. I question if I be not foolish, obstinate; if I had not better reconsider, and resolve that in the faith of my father I can live and die, and thus retain dear Selwyn's love and promise. I meditate, resolve, doubt, and inquire upon a sleepless pillow—and when a voice within says, No, no, you cannot; I rebel and say, And why not? I would be but following the course intended, had this girl Catherine never crossed my path. Why should an examination into the Catholic religion so fetter my



conscience as with "hooks of steel"? Why can I not give a bound, a leap, and be free; casting for ever behind me the mazes and meshes that separate me from the one love of my life? And yet, unaccountably, I am *not* "in a strait betwixt two." For when I say, "I cannot give up Selwyn, no, I cannot give him up," another voice asserts itself. It says, so softly, yet firmly, "Though you give up all else, you will never give up your religious faith; for it is founded upon a rock, and though the rains fall, and the winds beat against it, and the floods roll around it, it shall not perish, but sustain you triumphantly to the end!" In yielding to this voice, who shall say I am not influenced by a possibility that God will deign to listen to my earnest prayers, and that Selwyn shall be brought to seek the same faith? Alas, alas! that earthly love should be mingled with the divine! For here, surely I may say it on this page, I can but confess that I can never cease to love Selwyn—never, never—through all time, and to the end of eternity, were eternity not infinite. I may avoid writing his name upon these pages—but I know not how to erase the indelible imprint from my heart. Merciful Jesus, have mercy upon me!



## XVI.



CATHERINE has been explaining to us the Rosary. It seems that is the proper name—they do not call them beads. Though a most fit name it would be, I thought, as I read in one of Father Burke's books about the Venerable Bede of England. It said *bede*, in Saxon, signified prayer. The thought at once struck me that that was the reason the Catholic beads were so-called. How appropriate! I must ask Father Burke about it, and also about the origin of the Rosary, by whom instituted, and so forth. Questions come up every day that I wish to have answered, but somehow when Father Burke comes they are all put to flight. Sometimes I have charged mamma with them, and she speaks about them; or sometimes in the course of my reading I find explanations that satisfy me.

The Rosary, like everything else about the Catholic religion, strange and blind at first, becomes beautiful when fully understood. Those who speak of it contemptuously know nothing about it. "While they sneer, the Catholic may be ascending to heaven," as I read to-day. Father Burke said, when speaking of "veneration of Mary," that the Protestant assertion that this derogated from honor due to the Father and the Son fell to the ground; for the Catholic prayed



to the Father and the Son equally or more with the Protestant; and the prayers addressed to Mary were additional petitions, by which God was but the more honored. In honoring Mary, the honor is on account of, and reflected to, her divine Son. I look now at all this in such a different, but such a satisfactory view since even a week ago. In honoring the saints, we honor those whom God has honored—we honor them for his Name's sake. In short, the Catholic religion inculcates so boundless a love and worship of God as to teach the heart to call upon every living creature in heaven and upon earth to join with it in giving praise and glory to his holy name. Can we imagine that God is not pleased with *such* homage? I opened to-day in Faber's *All for Jesus*, and the very commencement of a certain chapter was, "Our religion is emphatically the 'worship of Jesus.'" Shall I believe him, a convert, whose tender heart seems, by his writings, to have been dissolved in the love of God and of heaven; or shall I believe the enemies of this all-absorbing faith when they say, "It is the worship of the creature"?

There are doubtless enthusiasts in the Catholic fold. With every branch of their religion they may carry their devotion to Mary and to the saints to an extreme. From certain portions of their writings, you might perhaps judge that they honored them unduly. But it is to be remembered that this is an *aside* of their devotion; not the



principal part. It would be unfair to say they had no worship but for the Blessed Virgin and the saints, when this very worship sprang from their exceeding love to the Father. I know from experience that, if I love a friend, that love extends in a degree to all with whom he is connected, even to things inanimate. I have a watch, a pencil, various things that were my father's. They are doubly endeared to me, simply *because* they were his. His picture hangs at home in our parlor. Mamma knows it is only his picture; yet she weeps before it, because it recalls all the love of her early life, all that he was to her, all that he still is! Does she, then, worship his picture? But she would grieve to see a neighbor come in, and with frantic violence cut it in pieces or trample it beneath his feet. Thus grieved the faithful Catholic heart when the vandal hand of the Reformer defaced and burned the dear pictures of Jesus and Mary and the saints. Thus throbbed with agony the bosom of the church when she saw huge ropes thrown around the neck of the statues of Christ, by which they were pulled from their sacred niches, and hacked in pieces by worse than barbarian hands—by the hands of the Reformers! Was it, then, a crime, this clinging to pictures of those we love? Was it not then, is it not still, the fond device of the human heart to bring nearer the soul in its companionship with the object of its affection? And those sacred pictures—what could so adequately convey, even to untutored minds,



the transfigured loveliness of those gone before? Ah! an insane hatred to the church extended to the images, pictures, sacred vessels, even to the very temples of God! It was our Divine Lord who said:

“But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

Worse and worse! From among her own children, gathered to her bosom, was the serpent to sting, the Judas to betray the church. Yes, truly must there have been tares with the wheat in the sixteenth century. Plenty of supine souls glad to throw off the restraints of the ancient religion, ready to destroy every reminder of obligations unfulfilled, to blot out every vestige which should serve as an incentive or a reproach.

I look back upon Protestants with pity, upon Protestantism with hatred and contempt. Protestants as a class know not what they do when they speak against the Catholic Church. They speak of it as of the wind, with as little knowledge or thought even, “knowing not whence it comes, nor whither it goeth.” Have I not authority and reason so to speak; for was I not of them a part?



I know, then, how to have patience with their thoughtlessness, their utter ignorance upon this one subject. With Protestantism itself, however, I have no patience and no forbearance. Inasmuch as I hate falsehood, duplicity, calumny, so do I loathe Protestantism, a composition of these terms, a synonym for them all. It was born protesting, it lives protesting, and will probably die protesting, if it have strength left to protest. From first to last it utters a lie, upon the strength of which its very existence is staked. "The Catholic Church is the kingdom of Satan." If it succeed in making mankind believe this, the Catholic Church must die out finally, and Protestantism shall rule the world. If she hesitate, if she falter, if she cease to cry aloud upon her high walls and towers (and she is but human), then woe to her superstructure, for her falsehood, her foundation, is weakened, and her days are numbered. Hence her unwearied vigilance, her league, her compromise with the world, against the church of God, which was to be always known by "being everywhere spoken against."

Protestantism insists upon faith. This, too, after having come out from the very home of faith, and after having cut herself off from every ground and rule of faith. What authority hath she, who cut herself loose from the only source of authority? What claim hath she to love and obedience, whose first and every act has been in violent rebellion against the parent, who, like a mother, still pities, and would reclaim her?



This is much for me to say—for me, so recently a convert. I can scarcely account for this decided nature of my sentiments. Only on this principle: that when a person has been grossly deceived, when, having had implicit faith in a friend, he finds him utterly false, he is apt no more to believe in him nor trust in him.

Nothing has so much contributed to my conversion, and particularly to mamma's, as the discovery that Protestantism utterly and wilfully misrepresents the doctrines and practices of the true church. All that Protestantism holds and teaches as truth, aside from her falsehoods, is borrowed from the church. Her doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, her very belief in the Word of God, all rest solely upon that enemy which she so cruelly maligns. If the frail, weak heart of mortal turn away for what Protestantism hath not to offer; and if haply it find rest from its wanderings within what, it feels assured, is the fold of the Good Shepherd, what more natural than that fold should seem to it exceeding precious—the more so, in contrast to the barren wilderness it has wearily wandered through? All this mamma and I have talked over. She feels this much more fully than I could be expected to do. Her mind is entirely devoted to the subject; so much so, that I do not think she takes time to consider if she be sick or well.

Catherine says that the reason I was interested in seeing her first repeat her rosary was because




she had me that moment in thought—she was praying for me! It is thus I will pray for Selwyn.

She says it is holy water with which she has been bathing mamma's eyes; and that whenever she applied it she offered a prayer to the effect that the application might prove beneficial to her suffering eyes, and that, in like manner, God would so open the eyes of her understanding as that she might be able to discover "the true Light, which may light every one that cometh into the world." When Catherine told me these things, I looked up to her with a kind of reverence. I thought there must appear something about her of the supernatural. But she is only an ordinary mortal, an humble servant-girl; though full of faith, and perfect in obedience to the laws of God, and the precepts of the church.



XVII.

ESTERDAY was mamma's and my first Easter Sunday — the day when our blessed Saviour arose from the dead! Every year, for eighteen hundred and seventy years, has the church honored and celebrated this, one of her sweetest, holiest, gladdest days! Every year, yet *we* knew it not! *We* had no part nor lot in the general rejoicing, in the offering of flowers, in the solemn thanksgivings, in the anthems of praise. The church poured forth exultantly her *Gloria in Excelsis*, and the very angels must have joined in her thrilling hosannas, while the outside world, and *we* amongst the rest, cast contemptuous glances, cried, "Away with your ignorance, your superstition!" gathered the folds of our garments closer about us, whispering as we glided by, "Holier than thou."

Had I ten thousand lives, each of which was to be indefinitely prolonged, I could not sufficiently thank God that he has brought me into the so-called superstitions of Catholicity. Yea, I feel to-day, with the baptismal water fresh upon my forehead, with the breath of the Holy Comforter still upon my spirit, that the sacrifice of my youthful love which I had deemed so great, nay, so



almost impossible, is but too slight for the inestimable gifts I have received—the love of Jesus, the grace of God, the knowledge of his church.

The weather has been remarkably mild and pleasant for the season. Every day, for the last week, Uncle Abner has harnessed his clever little pony into the old-fashioned chaise, and taken mamma to drive. She enjoyed it, and has become benefited by it. It is singular what an impression one receives at Uncle Abner's house. Though right in the midst of the city, you seem to live in a tiny world of country. Aunt has her cow and calf, her hens, turkeys, and doves. Uncle has his stable, pony, chaise, garden, fruit-trees, *et cetera*. The neighboring houses are almost hid away by magnificent trees that surround the whole grounds. It is truly a delightful retreat. "What will you do with it?" I said to him, the other day, but regretted immediately the question, for this was his answer: "Can't imagine now, since the naughty little girl I had willed it to has gone and turned Papist. She would make a nunnery of it, of course!"

We were all so thankful that yesterday proved beautiful. Catherine had all along assured us that we need have no fears upon that point; for was not Easter Sunday always bright and glorious? Mamma was unusually animated and cheerful. Uncle Abner took her to church in the chaise, while Aunt Ruth accompanied Catherine and myself. This was aunt's first visit to a Catholic



sanctuary. I had commenced attending service on Palm Sunday. I was so powerfully affected that I cried nearly the whole time. It was so brought home to me, for the first time, that Christ did really enter into Jerusalem, and that green boughs were spread in his way! Holy Week has been to me the most wonderful, bewildering of my life! Written in my life, if not in this book. It is impossible to express the impression made by the altars, flowers, lights, everything so new and strange. Will I ever get used to it? Will I ever get so to understand the Mass? For it is not only Latin in word, but altogether Greek in signification. If the priest would pronounce his Latin more slowly, I might get something of the sense. How I am ever to know when to kneel and when to stand I cannot comprehend, only as I look at the others, and "do as the Romans do." That is very awkward. However, I shall make it a study, like anything else which I am desirous of learning. Catherine says "it will all come to me," and I hope she is right. I said after Mass was over, "Well, this is worship." Father Burke preached a very eloquent sermon upon the resurrection. That I could understand and admit. In his words, I forgot everything. It was only when he was done that I thought he must ever finish. It was the finest sermon I ever heard. Never before had I fully realized that Christ did really arise from the dead. Had this keeping of the day aught to do with it? If the Fourth of July had never been celebrated,



I wonder how many would think on that day of George Washington? No doubt, the parades made on the glorious Fourth, the processions, speeches, firing of cannon, serve to keep fresh in the memory of every child in the land the day of American Independence. Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Son of God, gave up his life in agony to redeem mankind from the tyranny of sin. On the third day he arose from the dead, proving thus that he was indeed the God-man, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Is not that a day to be commemorated? I think one reason why the Catholic Church so wins the respect and love of her children is because she is in everything so connected with the Church of the Apostles. So connected, I say.? Because she *is* the Church of the Apostles, were it not better to assert?

I often think of this remark of Hecker's: "We do not worship a dead God." He elsewhere says: "We refuse to acknowledge for our Saviour one dead and separated from us by eighteen centuries." "If Christ is to be to us a Saviour, we must find him here, now, and where we are, in this age of ours also; otherwise he is no Christ, no Saviour, no Immanuel, no God *with us*." Speaking of the Holy Eucharist, he says:

"When we consider that God is really and truly present on the altars of the Catholic Church—that he is the guest of the Catholic heart, its life and its nourishment—is it to be wondered at that this church has given birth to so many heroes, saints,



and martyrs, and still continues to do so? Oh! life becomes great, noble, divine, under the influence and in the participation of so great mysteries! Is it not a sufficient evidence of the divinity of the Catholic faith that it elevates the human heart to the belief that it receives, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Almighty God? Is not this an audacity of faith and love which none but God himself can inspire, sustain, and perpetuate in poor, weak human hearts?"

— It was a great day for Catherine, this last lovely Easter. It seemed as if she, too, felt baptized anew in the love of Jesus. Aunt Ruth expressed herself as well pleased, but went into no raptures. Uncle Abner was very reticent upon his experience. He keeps himself hidden for the most part. He is no doubt reading, as several of Father Burke's books have disappeared. There is no commotion made about the mystery of their departure. We know that they will come again, "bringing their sheaves with them."

When mamma kissed me good-night, she said tenderly, "We are again newly bound together, my daughter, being members of the One Holy Church, founded by our dear Lord. May you realize this, and rejoice in it as I do, Myrrha!"


We have twice now said the Rosary with Catherine. We are to repeat a portion of it every night. And each night I go to sleep still saying it, "now, and at the hour of our death." It is pleasant to think how those words have dwelt upon the lips of



saints and martyrs. How they have gone up like an incense, following the "Our Father," for so many centuries to the eternal throne. Truly are they sacred words which the church puts into the mouths of her children!



XVIII.

“YRRHA! Myrrha! are you asleep?”

Thus called Aunt Ruth last night after I had fallen into a slight oblivion.

“What is it, Aunt Ruth?” I asked, springing up in bed. “Is uncle sick—is mamma worse?”

“Nobody is sick, Myrrha, don’t be alarmed; no one is sick, unless it be myself, and I *am* heart-sick! I can do nothing with your uncle. He is out in the barn, praying as loud as he can scream. He won’t hear me, nor heed me, nor answer me. He is wrestling with the Lord as did Jacob—and seems, like him, determined ‘not to let him go, except he bless him’; the burden of his prayer is for the Lord to give him back his peace of mind, his faith in the Methodist Church!”

“And that will God never give him,” I said aloud, more to myself than to my unexpected visitor.

“Please don’t say so, Myrrha; perhaps he will. But your uncle will get his death-cold in the barn. I don’t think he slept one wink all last night. And for several nights, I should have thought, from his tumbling and tossing, that he was lying on a hot gridiron, instead of my best bed of live-geese feathers. Dear me! what does



possess him? I really am afraid he will go stark mad, if he is not already so."

Aunt, drawing her shawl around her, had seated herself on the side of my bed, while I had lain down again, with both pillows under my head. I could see, by the white moonlight streaming in, that her aged face was white and troubled, and I could have cried for her in sympathy; but that would do no good. I said: "Dear aunt, believe me, uncle will come out all right. Did I not have my struggle? and did not mamma have hers? and did we not have to yield at last?—and see how happy we are now! Just so it will be with uncle; have patience, courage, and hope."

"But I hope, Myrrha, you didn't scare everybody's wits out of their heads by your long prayers, and fasts, and vigils. If this is getting faith—but there! I don't want to be wicked. As for Abner, I don't see what there is for him to be so worried about; he has lived a good Christian life, he is a good man—good as gold, if I do say it, abating his hot temper, and that he can't help, seeing he was born with it—but dear me! how am I ever going to get him in from that cold stable? He will be down sick, and I shall be sick fretting about him."

"Do you think I could have any influence over him, aunt? Supposing I get up and dress, and go out with you; do you think it would be of use?"

"The truth is, I don't think it would one bit. There never was a time before when he would not



hear to me. Now he is unmanageable. I believe he don't even listen to me with his natural ears. I hope he will be the better able to hear the voice of the Lord when he shall speak peace to his soul. O Lord! come quickly!"

"Let us repeat the Lord's Prayer together for dear Uncle Abner," I said. And after this, I added: "O Blessed Virgin Mary! and all ye holy angels and saints of God, make intercession for him." I still kept praying mentally, and I think Aunt Ruth did also, for she was silent. After awhile, she said:

"I feel a great deal better than I did. I wish I had come to you sooner. You are a great comforter, for one so young. In all the little troubles of my life, Abner has helped to share them. I don't know how to do or bear anything without him."

"I know; our burdens become lighter when shared with another," I murmured. And the thought of Selwyn came to me—the thought of what he had been, what he might have been! Then I thought how slight the hold we had upon human love! Here was Aunt Ruth—how she leaned upon her husband!—how her husband leaned upon her! Yet how little was the thread of life! Was it not better to lean upon God alone, upon whom at last you *must* lean for support? A ray of comfort, yea, of peace, stole into my heart, that, though all else should fail, God, the Eternal Father, was my rock and my refuge:



even the rock and the refuge of all who would put their trust in him. Presently we were startled by hearing the voice of uncle. He was calling his wife by name. Without a word she ran out joyfully, and I saw nor heard more of her for that night. Resting perfectly assured that all would yet be well, I soon fell asleep, to dream of seeing Uncle Abner climbing aerial ladders that had points of support neither upon earth nor in heaven. Though he managed himself so dextrously, I had no fear for him.

“Do you expect the priest again soon, Myrrha?” was uncle’s first salutation this morning.

Now, I did not expect him at all; but as I felt sure uncle wished to see him, I bethought myself that we could send for him. I therefore answered: “I dare say he will be here in a day or two.”

“When he comes, let me know of it.”

I repeated to mamma uncle’s question, after having informed her of the events of the preceding night. She felt convinced that uncle would not rest satisfied until he had conferred with Father Burke; and at once despatched Catherine with a note requesting him to call soon as convenient, slightly hinting the occasion.

Somewhat late in the afternoon, I went to apprise uncle of the priest’s arrival. He followed me into mamma’s room. Uncle Abner was not one to do things by halves; nor, having made up his mind to do a thing, could fear, shame, or anything under the sun, deter him from doing it boldly and



openly. We had expected him to make to the priest a confession of his having received the gift of faith. But we had not expected to behold this sturdy Methodist, this bluff old man, fall upon his knees at the feet of Father Burke, his massive body shaking with the sobs that convulsed his frame.

We all fell to weeping. Aunt Ruth had silently followed, and, kneeling by mamma's side, leaned her head on the arm of her chair.

The priest was the first to break the silence, by repeating some passages from the Scriptures, in a low, soothing tone of voice. I cannot recall the words, for I seemed, for the moment, sensible only to sound.

When uncle could speak, he said: "I vowed to God that I would never kneel at the feet of a Catholic priest. Because of that vow, I vowed again that my first act as a Catholic should be to fall at your feet for the blessing of God."

The minister of God could scarcely speak. In truth, there was more of weeping done at that interview than anything else, and I may as well draw over it the veil. It does not now seem to me surprising that mamma or I should have become converted to Catholicity. It seems to have been easy, natural, and consistent. But it does seem strange, unaccountable, that one imbued with prejudice to the age of threescore and ten should yield in complete submission to the Catholic faith—strange to our human vision. Not strange when viewed in the light of God's mysterious ways.



— Day after day, uncle comes into mamma's room, to talk with her upon the one subject that engrosses all his thoughts. They got upon the subject of Purgatory. Now, mamma herself was not the best informed upon this subject. Uncle was not satisfied. He could not, all at once, rid himself of the tendency to reject everything not particularly enlarged upon in the Bible. He took his hat, and started for the priest's house. In an hour or two he came back, not only convinced of the existence of a Purgatory, but considering it a very necessary doctrine of belief. In fact, he didn't see how he had ever got along consistently in his theological views, without such a place of abode where venial sins might be atoned for, and the soul made pure before being admitted to the presence of God. He is an inveterate inquirer. Father Burke said to him, the other day, that converts were very curious—wished to study into and understand everything—that they were never satisfied till they died. With a *native-born* Catholic it was different. He did not consider it necessary to understand every why and wherefore. It was sufficient to know the doctrines and rules of the church that he might heed and obey them. His faith was without question or wavering. He did not accept this or discard that, because he fancied an inconsistency to reason; the authority of the church he recognized as divine, it was his duty, therefore, to obey. Uncle has become a perfect enthusiast. He went last Sunday to the class-meeting, and there announced his



change of views. Had a thunderbolt fallen in the midst, it could not have produced greater consternation. For Uncle Abner had been so positive in coming off victor that he had hinted to no one of his brethren the battle in which he had been engaged. It seems he went on to explain his new doctrines somewhat, in the course of his "experience," when he was put down by cries of "No popery ! no popery !" He therefore came out from among them, shaking the dust from his feet. There was no doubt a great commotion among the brothers and sisters when the dust got fairly settled. The devil had got one of their number ; it behooved them to be on their guard, lest they too fall victims to him who was going about like a roaring lion.



## XIX.



WE were very busy in the garden, Aunt Ruth and I, this beautiful morning of this charming May month. Uncle Abner was busy with his spade fashioning beds in all sorts of geometrical figures, except, perhaps, the square—for he had not the correctest eye for angles—and we were following in his wake, each with an impromptu cornucopia of the downiest, wind-bewitched, vexing little seeds, when, to our regret, we were summoned to the house to meet visitors. Aunt Ruth being very informal and old-fashioned, and I ditto, we contented ourselves by simply washing our hands, as preparation for a reception. Three elderly ladies greeted us. Two of these, the Misses Bingham, I had met before. The third, Mrs. Sands, I rightly conjectured from the name to be the wife of Mr. Ebenezer Sands, a prominent member of the Methodist Society. I judged, from the frequent mention of his name in uncle's family, that he was regarded as a leader and an oracle. The elder Miss Bingham was a large masculine person of about sixty, with no comeliness of form or face. She affected high dignity of manner, for the simple reason that she could not be easy or graceful. She seemed put together a good deal like a machine,



and when she moved it was as if by wires. For instance, if she moved her head to one side, her whole body went with it. Her face was square-cut and heavy, her eyes unusually large, staring, and prominent. The little children of her acquaintance call her Miss Wildcat Nancy, they averring a strong resemblance to exist between the faces of the spinster and Miss *Feline*. When Aunt Ruth told me this afterwards, I thought they would have been dull indeed not to trace such likeness. Her sister, Miss Sarah, was in every respect her opposite. Her *petite* figure, even at fifty-five, was perfect. Her step was quick, elastic; her movement graceful as the gazelle's. She had small, delicate features, a pretty mouth, a sparkling hazel eye. She would have been exceedingly attractive, were it not that every motion and every word was premeditated. Habitually quick as were her gestures, her thought was speedier, and debated whether or not they were of grace. If "prunes and prisms" dwelt not ever on her lips, it was because "propriety" was always there, and there was no room. These sisters, so oddly dissimilar, verify the saying that "Nature is fond of freaks." Miss Nancy and Miss Sarah have no affection for each other, and do sparing enough to span the river Charles. I smiled as Aunt Ruth related to me this incident: Miss Nancy came in one day, having had a violent quarrel with "little sister." They happened to be very hungry at dinner. Their appetites had increased since they put their potatoes in the oven,



and the number proved insufficient. There happened to be but seven; each had consumed three. Whose should be the fourth? Nancy declared it was hers, because she was sure she had put four of her own potatoes in for baking. Sarah was equally sure she had put in four of hers. For it must be borne in mind that these loving sisters did not have all things in common, but separate and distinct, even down to potatoes and pickles. How was this momentous question of the potato to be decided? Sarah, being quickest of movement, seized and nearly devoured it before Nancy recovered from her impotent rage and disgust. "What was I to do?" said she slowly and emphatically, in relating this to Aunt Ruth. "What *could* I do? I could have pinched her into powder—the little minx! At length, my wits came to me, and I looked up at her, and I said, 'Impudence!'" This word, however, uttered ever so sarcastically, had not annihilated "little sister"; for here she was, this day, sitting prim and properly in Miss Nancy's umbrageous shadow, bound to her, strange to say, by one single tie, that of Methodism. Much as they differed upon all other points, in this they agreed ever. This was the one wheel to which each could put a shoulder. After the usual preliminaries, strangely constrained, Mrs. Sands, like a woman of business, broached the subject of her morning mission by saying:

"Sister White, we, a committee of three, have been chosen by our church to come to talk with



you, and to see if you have any fellowship with the strange views that your husband seems to have taken up with."

Aunt Ruth seemed intently engaged in smoothing out a wrinkle with her forefinger, which had crept into her clean, ample white apron. She did not reply at once. Miss Nancy's whole body moved, preparatory to a speech; this, however, was nipped in the bud by Miss Sarah's off-hand readiness:

"It is proper that you should know, Sister White, how dreadfully scandalized we all feel about Mr. White's defection. There is only one opinion about it, however, and that is, that he has been led away by undue influences," glancing at my humble self, "and that, in reality, he is no doubt crazy. I have heard more than one person discussing the propriety of having him placed in the Lunatic Asylum."

"Whatever *he* may choose to do," spake the elder Miss Bingham, "we see no necessity for you to follow. We have more confidence in your sanity of mind and natural good sense."

"And in your sense of propriety," broke in Miss Sarah, who could never let an opportunity pass for bringing in her favorite word.

"And in your regard for old friends and the associates of so many years; in your attachment to our beautiful new church, and to our dear Mr. Green, and his interesting family. Where will you find a pleasanter woman than Mrs. Green—



though she has her enemies, to be sure—but, then, what woman has not? And she takes such an interest in the Dorcas Society! And here are all of us, who feel such a deep interest for you; why, we feel as if we cannot give you up. There is no one among the rest of the sisters of the church that I should send to so soon, in case of sickness, as to you—my little Nellie just dotes on you—nobody else in the world can get her to take castor-oil; and my little Teddy, when he gets angry at me, as the best of children sometimes will, you know, declares he is going over to live with Aunt Ruthie. And it is just nothing with them all but Aunt Ruthie—Aunt Ruthie,” said Mrs. Sands, who was somewhat disposed to be prolix and digressive.

“We are all a good deal like the children,” said Miss Nancy. “We should none of us know what to do without Aunt Ruth. If the Lord should see fit to take you from us by sickness and death, we could after a time become reconciled, because we must all submit to his will; but to have you go over to the house of abominations—”

“It is never to be thought of—never,” interrupted “little sister.” “Nothing could be as improper; we must do everything in our power; leave no stone unturned; and that is what we are here for, this morning, ‘to pluck you as a brand from the burning.’”

“You are very kind—” attempted Aunt Ruth; but Mrs. Sands got the better of her.

“There’s nothing we wouldn’t do for you, dear



Sister White, even to furnishing you a home in any of our houses. I suppose Brother White will be so headstrong there will be no living in the house with him, unless you follow in his crooked ways; but don't you do it—we will all do everything for you; just let him see what he gets by listening to the temptations of Satan; he will find it a hard punishment for you to refuse to live with him in his old age. But if he becomes a Catholic, I suppose he will go the whole figure, and think there ought to be no marrying or giving in marriage; and that everybody, young and old, ought to live shut up in convents."

"Forgetting," said the lively "little sister," "that, when God created Adam, he said 'it was not good for man to be alone.'"

"Umph!" chimed in her senior; "how does it happen that you have set that sentiment at defiance all your life?"

"For the same reason that you have, I suppose," retorted Miss Sarah; "for what could be expected more proper or natural than that a young girl should follow the example of her elder sister?"

"Not so much elder as might be supposed," snapped Miss Nancy, who was very sensitive whenever age was referred to.

"Five times three hundred and sixty-five days is no small number, arithmetically considered, whatever you may think of it," flippantly answered back the still pretty lips of the diminutive old maid.

Mrs. Sands, foreseeing a squall, adroitly shifted.



sails, and put in her oar from a different standpoint:

“It is to me the strangest thing in the world how any one can see the least sense or meaning in the performances at these Catholic churches. If you go to what they call the Low Mass, it is all nonsense and silence, and words mumbled over down in the throat, or through the nose of some outlandish foreigner that perhaps can’t speak a word of English; and if you go to what they call High Mass, it is like some kind of a play, half-pantomime — no worship, no prayers, no reading of the Bible, no shouts of Glory to God, no Amens, no nothing that anybody on earth or in heaven can understand. I’ve no idea they know how to make anything out of it themselves. Now, you know you can’t like it, Sister White, can you? Don’t you like, a great deal better, a good rousing prayer and sermon from Brother Green, who makes the house ring with his voice, and tremble when his clenched fist comes down on the Bible or the pulpit, and Amen comes from every pew—now don’t you?”

Aunt Ruth, at length really appealed to, replied: “No, Mrs. Sands, I cannot say that I do. You must not forget that I was brought up a Quakeress; and I cling to the quiet and silence of the Quaker worship. I have joined the Methodist worship only on account of my husband. He liked it, and I could put up with it, but it has never suited me. Perhaps you have heard of the little girl who,



when a minister was shouting so loud as to be unintelligible, said to her mother: 'Mamma, if that man was nearer to God, he would not have to speak so loud, would he?' When my heart is nearest to God, I am silent. When I commune with him in secret, it is with whispered words. But we are not all alike, ladies."

"No, we are not alike," echoed Miss Nancy.

"I don't know how anybody can help liking the Methodists," said Mrs. Sands warmly.

"If I could not be a Methodist, I would never be anything," said little Sarah, with equal warmth. "I love the very ground a Methodist treads on."

Her sister Nancy fastened upon the speaker a steady gaze, sarcastically rejoining: "No doubt of it—particularly the ground that *one* treads upon—a certain widower with a family of only nine small children."

The little old maiden's hazel eyes flashed back a deal of scorn upon her sister, and she bit her scarlet lips, but said never a word. A blush upon her face told that her sister knew where to strike.

"We ought to agree to leave widowers alone just now," rather sharply spoke the married lady of the committee. "We came here for a special object, and I don't see as we are accomplishing anything, unless it be in keeping Sister White from planting her garden."

"It's a nice day for putting in seeds," said Aunt Ruth, "so free from wind; I always try to make the most of such days; they are so scarce in spring-time."



If the ladies took this hint, they made no motion to act upon it, for, after a good deal of fidgeting and some aside talk among themselves, Mrs. Sands again addressed the subject of their mission:

"You cannot promise us, then, that you will not forsake us, Sister White?"

"I cannot promise you that I shall not go with my husband."

"Husband or no husband, I would never go wilfully and blind to the bottomless pit," quoth Miss Sarah energetically.

"I guess it will be no husband any how," returned her sister, "as far as you are concerned."

"Goodness knows, I would give kingdoms if you had a husband of your own, that somebody's head besides mine might receive your coals of fire."

"Don't let them burn you, pray; don't get hot; keep your temper, little sister."

Mrs. Sands laughed: "You two couldn't live, I believe, if your tongues were not waging an eternal warfare. We know you don't mean anything unkind, but a stranger, to listen to you, would think you hated each other, from your serious mode of pleasantries. It is really comical."

"The pleasantries *are* comical," said Sarah.

Miss Nancy contented herself with casting at her sister a withering glance; then, turning her eyes full upon Aunt Ruth, while majestically rising to her feet, said:

"Then we shall report that you choose to follow



your husband, rather than the goodly rules of our Methodist discipline?"

"I shall go with my husband certainly," was the firm, respectful answer.

"And may God have mercy on your soul," solemnly added the spinster, as if addressing a person about to be hanged.

"Thank you!" absently and innocently responded the quiet Quakeress.

"I suppose, then, we need not even pray for you?" said one.

"You always *was* a little queer, Sister White, you and Brother White, too, now that we come to think it over," said another.

"Extremely odd it is for one to lose *all* sense of propriety, and assume the responsibility of such a fearful step," rapidly spoke little Sarah.

"We pity you—and *would* help you—but you won't let us," was Mrs. Sands' trembling good-bye.

"We wash our hands of all sin in this matter. It lies at your own door," were the last consolatory words of Miss Nancy.

Little Sarah affected to laugh gaily as she darted down the door-steps, quoting lightly the words: "We shake the dust from our feet as a testimony against you." And, behold, they were gone!

I opened my mouth for the first time: "As good as a play. But do tell me, aunt, how it is that you can allow people to go on in that way, and never say one word for yourself?"

"I made up my mind, a great many years



ago, that, if people wished to quarrel with me, they should have all the work to do; all the talking, scolding, fretting, railing. In that case, what is quarrelling to me? I keep cool, silent, preserve my own self-respect, and, really, the respect of my enemy. Come, we must now hurry to make up lost time." And away we sped to the garden, almost discouraged at sight of the big beds, ready and waiting their tiny deposits.

Aunt Ruth, that she might work the faster, maintained a steady silence, while I, unmindful of my own digital movements, revolved the ladies just gone in my mind, their conversation, the object of their visit, and their utter ignorance of myself, whom they evidently regarded as a school-child, beneath their notice.

Was there not, I questioned, among the congregation of Methodists, three women better entitled to be called ladies in every sense of the word than that committee of three? Doubtless; but, for some reason, "the weak were chosen to confound the foolishness of the wise."



XX.



LETTER from Selwyn! God be praised, he has gained the faith!—he has become a Catholic!

I thought, this bright September morning, sitting on the piazza with mamma, bright and almost well, by my side, that I was happy as one need be in this world. Uncle and aunt both happy, and rejoicing in the new faith, in the old church—Catherine living near and coming often to visit us—the “nine days’ wonder” of the conversion of all of us having been succeeded by some other wonder equally sensational, and we left to pursue peacefully our quiet life, what more could we ask? We had given up our home in Ellicott; we were to live henceforth at Uncle Abner’s; for how could we live away from the church? We had formed pleasant acquaintances with some intelligent Catholics, and found easy access to Catholic literature.

“We have such reason to be thankful and happy,” I said to mamma only this morning, thinking silently that, in all probability, had we not come to Charlestown, she might not have recovered.

And, now, to-night, we have so much *more* reason to be thankful. Here is Selwyn’s letter—it shall speak for itself:



“MY DEAR MYRRHA:

“I have many words to say to you—a long letter to write. First of all, to my dearest friend I must impart the surprising fact, the happy truth, that the morning of this day—Assumption of the Blessed Virgin—I have been received into the church, one, holy, Catholic, apostolic.

“Is it not meet and proper that next my praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God, to whom first I owe this inestimable blessing, should come my heart’s hymn of thankfulness to Myrrha, whose prayers before God’s throne have much availed for me? You said at our last parting—forgive me, Myrrha, how unjust I was—‘Remember, Selwyn, that I shall not forget to pray for you.’ I looked into your face as you pronounced the words, and, knowing well the earnestness of your nature, I said: If human prayer can avail with God, and if Myrrha plead with her whole soul in prayer, who shall say if I stand or fall? I therefore remembered your words. In truth, they were nearly all I had to remember, for, in my blindness and passion, I had scarcely given you the opportunity to speak. Allow me again to express my profound regret for my injustice and unkindness, Myrrha. I will give you my history from the beginning. After graduation at Yale, I shortened my proposed visit to my parents; for Ellicott was not home to me, since Myrrha was no longer there! Accordingly, I embarked for Europe a month earlier than I had designed.



“On the eve of my departure from New York, I was sauntering aimlessly down one of the principal streets, when a large crowd gathered around a church attracted my attention. Impelled by something, I know not what, I made my way through this swaying multitude, until I found myself standing with many thousands within the walls of what I at once found to be a Catholic church. A mission was being held. A thousand lights were blazing before the altars. Flowers of every variety, exquisite in fragrance and infinite in number, adorned every conceivable lodging-place, making glad and beautiful the temple of God. Before the principal altar, beside the mission cross, stood the priest of God. He was an elderly man, tall in stature, with an athletic frame. The blaze of the many candles seemed to create a kind of glory around his gray hair; while the fire of his eye glowed and kindled anew, as burning words of eloquence flowed from his lips. I was late, and the sermon was nearly concluded. I learned from the closing words that this was the last night of the mission. The exercises that followed made upon me a very deep impression—nothing among them more so than what was called a renewal of the baptismal vows. I was so taken by surprise, and the scene is so confused in my memory, that I cannot recall distinctly the precise questions: I remember well, however, and shall never forget, the effect upon me of those solemn words and responses:



“‘Do you promise to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world?’

“‘Yes,’ deep and earnest from the vast throng, while every hand was uplifted from amidst that living sea of forms.

“‘Do you promise to obey the commandments of God, the precepts of his holy church?’

“‘Yes,’ as if spoken from the depths of many waters.

“‘Do you promise not to frequent grogshops, liquor-saloons, and similar immoral places?’

“‘Yes,’ with the hand uplifted still to heaven, and tears raining down from many a manly face and woman’s quivering cheek.

“‘Do you promise to uphold at every time and circumstance the teachings of our holy faith, to advance all that in you lies the progress of our holy mother, the church?’

“And again the emphatic ‘Yes’ swelled as upon billowy waves.

“My eyes became riveted upon the missionary. It needed but a glance to see that he was a person of remarkable power. He was commanding in manners, attitude, and voice. There was about him a strength irresistible, combined with a certain gentleness that wins alike your respect and your trust.

“As beneath the mission cross he stretched forth his arms, and bestowed upon that human sea of palpitating hearts—now stirred to its profoundest depths—the Papal benediction, his form seemed to



tower up in magnitude, and his face to be lighted up as with the glory of those transfigured on the Mount. I thought him a St. Peter in zeal, a St. Paul in knowledge and power, a St. John in love. My dear Myrrha, it is wonderful how my heart did homage to that man. I forgot that he was not of my faith. I forgot that he was a teacher of idolatry, a preacher of superstition and folly. I only thought that if I were a Christian, I could follow such a leader through fire and flood—that I could confidently lay my hand in his, so to speak, sure that he would lead me to the heavenly city.

“As I went out of the church, half-borne by the crowd, I was seized with an impulse to seek the missionary, if but to clasp one moment his hand. This was impossible, and next moment was succeeded by the thought of its absurdity. My mind was overwrought by heat and excitement—the fresh air would dispel my infatuation, and restore me to myself. The following morning, after a somewhat restless night, during which I lived over again the events of the evening, I found myself on board the steamer, bound for the Old World.

“I stood on deck, watching the passengers as they came in hurried crowds; for it really seemed that every traveller, ocean-bound, had multitudes of friends to whom to bid adieu—every one but myself. The leave-takings made me feel quite like one who ‘treads alone some banquet-hall deserted,’ etc. At length came a crowd larger than the rest, which, as it approached nearer, most of the by-



standers joined. Imagine my surprise to behold in the midst the gray hair, the majestic form of the missionary. Yes, Myrrha, he was to be my fellow-passenger on the wide sea. I felt a sudden thrill; whether of gladness or regret, I knew not.

“Such an exhibition of love and reverence for mortal man I never before witnessed as was paid to this reverend apostle by men and women, rich and poor, gray-haired and youthful. They knelt to him for his blessing there upon the dusty pier, they kissed his hand, they shed torrents of tears, they could not let him go. I might have marvelled at this man’s wonderful hold upon the affections of his people had I not, on the previous evening, strangely to myself, felt an unaccountable attraction. Many times I brushed away the mist from before my eyes with my handkerchief that I might the better see, unmindful at the moment that the mist was but that of tears.

“The partings were all over at length—snowy handkerchiefs waved, and we were launched on the sea — not that sea ‘that rolls around all the world.’ As I watched the receding shores, I thought of you, Myrrha, and, strange to say, since our last wretched parting you had not seemed so near. Your words, ‘Remember, Selwyn, I shall never forget to pray for you,’ came to me as if freshly spoken, and with prophetic warning of the availability of those prayers at heaven’s throne. Although animated with the greatest desire to make the acquaintance of the missionary, and though I had



frequent opportunities of doing so, it was several days before I could summon courage to address him. I had made myself wretched by a harassing struggle against lifelong prejudice, one hour resolving that I would for ever 'roll it as a sweet morsel under my tongue'—the next, that surely no harm could ensue from learning at a competent source what were indeed the doctrines of the church. I was influenced finally by a curiosity to discover, if possible, wherein lay the enchantments which had fascinated women so intelligent as yourself and your mother.

"I was still undecided when, suddenly meeting him, a momentary impulse urged me to address him. He was evidently surprised at the brusqueness of my attack, for, before I gave him time for reply, I poured out, all at once, what had been in my mind since I first listened to his voice. Before he spoke to me, he looked at me intently with those soul-searching eyes of his, then, glancing upward and spreading forth his hands, whispered words in Latin: I think, now, he was thanking God for my awakening; I do not know. We sat down together—not that day only, but day after day—and I learned from the lips of this dear old man, this holy priest, this devoted missionary of the Society of Jesus, the wonderful story of the cross.

"Had I not heard it before now as 'a tale that is told'? It was a new history, a divine testament—to my soul a gospel. I need not tell to you, a happy convert, how one by one new



truths dawned—not dawned, but burst upon my mental vision; how beautiful arose the fabric of the church; how clear, how harmonious stood forth her doctrines; how grand in her age, her heroism, her battles, her victories, in her saints, her martyrs, her holy children; how glorious in her armor of charity, her shield of faith, her anchor of hope: nor how faded and far back flitted the whited sepulchre of heresy, the pale ghost of Protestantism—you know it all, thank God! *You* will not wonder that I believed implicitly the words of this priest of God. You, at least, will understand that God in his mercy had given me the one thing needful, the gift of faith. You will, with me, believe that the Supreme Arbiter of our lives sent me to learn his will and truth from the lips of his holy servant—as he sent Paul to Ananias—as he sent Cornelius to Simon.

“Need I say more to you? I rearranged my plan, and came directly to Rome, that I might not be separated from my venerable friend. We arrived but the day before yesterday. With what different eyes shall I view the wonders of the Eternal City?—with what new sentiments gaze upon the monuments of superstition and ignorance? And now, Myrrha—” Enough! I will quote no more.



XXI.

**M**RS. ARNOLD is Aunt Ruth's neighbor and most intimate friend. She has been long anticipating a visit from her eldest daughter, Mrs. Gilfillan, who has for many years resided in the far West—Dakota. A few days ago this Westerner arrived; to-day she has paid us a visit.

"You will excuse us for coming so early in the morning," she said, introductions being scarcely over, "but indeed I could not wait. Mother has been telling me about you. I find there is a double bond of sympathy, Mrs. Lake, between you and myself; first, in my having been, like you, a sufferer from a severe affection of the eyes; second, in having become, like yourself, a convert to the true church."

Mrs. Gilfillan arose, and, wheeling an ottoman across the room, seated herself upon it, between mamma and myself.

"And for this last reason," she continued, "you seem near and dear to me. I find on my return many old friends of my childhood and youth; but there is not one among them all for whom my heart has so warm a welcome as for you, strangers in the flesh, united to me in spirit by the bonds of faith."



She is, perhaps over-enthusiastic, but sincerely and ardently attached to her religion. Although she has been several years in the church, she never informed her mother of the same until now. Vain would be all words in a letter to remove that mother's lifelong prejudice; now, she could talk and explain day after day, "from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof," and; if she failed to convince, might persuade her of her own thorough happiness in the great change of her life.

"How did I become a Catholic?" in answer to our questions. "Well, in a very simple way. But I will go back a little. I was baptized by immersion at the age of thirteen. When I married Mr. Gilfillan, as he could not become a Baptist, I became, like himself, a Presbyterian, that we might be together in the same church. From the first we were careless Christians. Gradually, more and more came the world almost completely between my soul and its God. As a consequence, the faith of my girlhood, which had been strong in God and in revealed religion, became weakened, almost destroyed.

"After years of indifference, of doubt, of unbelief, and oh! such spiritual unrest at times, I began to wish I *could* believe with all my heart. If I could have that unquestioning faith which was mine for the first few years after my baptism by immersion, I would give all the world! Was it for ever gone? Should I find it no more on earth? Two of my little children had gone through 'the valley of the



shadow of death,' and, though I tried to fancy them in heaven, it was all darkness between me and them. Had their souls gone out in the night of annihilation, whither my own should follow? And should we know each other no more for ever? O my God! what a thought!

"If I *could* only have faith, and could I but know just what to believe—could a voice from heaven but speak to me! I had come to that. So, when I read in the *Atlantic Monthly* 'Our Roman Catholic Brethren,' and directly afterward saw on a neighbor's table *Aspirations of Nature*, by the same Hecker made mention of in the magazine article, which book I borrowed and read, I began to think there might be something in a religion of which I was so utterly ignorant.

"We were early settlers in Dakota, and lived on the frontier. My husband soon after became acquainted with an aged Catholic missionary, a Prussian priest, who had labored among the Indians forty years. He could not speak a word of English. Mr. Gilfillan conversed with him in Latin. He spoke French, but so fluently that I could understand but slightly. He was several times at our house. My very first thought favorable to Catholicity came over me as I looked into the venerable face of this good old man; for everybody pronounced him good, and by his Indians he was idolized. I asked, Could it be anything but a devoted love to God that had made this man in the prime of his life leave country,



home, and friends to dwell among savages, far from the refinements, nay, from all the comforts of civilization?

"I had not seen this good father for several years; he went with his savages further to the west; but I often recalled his benevolent face when I first began to question after reading *Aspirations*. He came up in my memory, and his presence seemed to hover around me like a benediction. Since I know more of the faith of Catholics in prayer, I believe he prayed for me when he came to our house. I conversed with him so little, but now I seem to have known him so well.

"A priest of the Benedictine Order had gathered together the scattered Catholics in our vicinity, and built a small church, where he said Mass two Sundays in a month. Somehow, we got in the habit of going. There were those who said my husband went through policy, as, being a politician, he wanted to secure Irish votes. There was no truth in this. He liked to hear Father Aylward preach, because, as he said, 'his sermons were so practical he could remember them all the week through.'

"If at first we went partly through curiosity and love of novelty, it was not long before I, at least, was thirsting for that sure faith that should be unto me the bread of life.

"We were invited to an exhibition at St. John's College, at the Abbey of St. Louis on the lake, some twelve miles distant. We were late, and



exercises had commenced, in a beautiful grove, partially artificial. The first thing that attracted me, after being conducted to a seat, was a cross cut in the bark of a tree near me. The cross! I had seen it in pictures, and as New England guide-boards; and I had seen it rise bright and golden from Catholic churches in these cities by the sea, but this was the first time I was ever affected by the sight of the cross.

"We went in to dinner. In the hall was a cross—in the dining-room was the cross and the crucifix—in every room was the cross! I was oppressed, impressed, and awed. There were pictures of saints, among the rest St. John, looking up into heaven with such wonderful eyes, his hands clasped in rapt intensity.

"It would be very easy to be good in such a place as this, I thought. One couldn't be anything else. It is holy ground. It was a relief to get out again, and ride through the grand forest, and breathe freely, knowing that the suffering Saviour was not looking down upon us agonizingly from the crucifix upon the wall. But never, never since, does it seem to me, has he ceased regarding me with those pleading eyes that have won me irresistibly. At the opening of the next session, we entered our young son as pupil. One day we rode up to visit him. It was cold, and Father Alexius, one of the professors, took us into his room, where was a good fire. He called in Father Aylward, whose home was here also. While my husband



was talking with them, and I had recovered comfort from the warmth, I began to glance about me from under my hat-brim.

“All at once, it had flashed upon my mind that this was a monk’s room; and, as it was probably the only visit—as indeed it was—I should be ever privileged to make to such a mediæval institution, I must make the most of it.

“My first thought, then, was of trap-doors leading down to inquisitorial regions. It is easy enough to have faith in such things when we read of them as being beyond seas; but to sit in a cultivated, scholarly gentleman’s room, who is easy, polite, deferential, and has not a look the least bit cruel, even though he wears the cowl, these ghosts of trap-doors and instruments of torture depart as suddenly as they came.

“More effectually were they put to flight when, raising my eye from the white floor, it met the crucifix fastened to the wall, where it should meet the eye from a kneeling posture. I cannot tell what that little crucifix said to me. Not that I have forgotten; I cannot forget. But then and there it solemnly and silently denied all the calumnies that had ever been heaped upon the religion it represents.

“‘Why am I here,’ it said, ‘if it be not to speak unto my owner of the Lord and Master, whom he so much loves as to venerate even the voiceless image of the Divine?’

“There were plenty of books, in all languages,



upon the table and upon the shelves; but, had they all found voice, and spoken to me the wonderful history and truths I have since learned from their pages, they would not have been more convincing or so affecting as the unworded story of that simple crucifix. Here was my inspiration for becoming a Catholic!

“Then came over me a thought of the *impossible* doctrines. And when a little later we went up to visit Father Aylward’s library, I greatly wished he would offer me some books, being too dull to think that he would be glad to loan them if I would but ask.

“I ventured to say at length that there was one doctrine in the church which I could never believe—transubstantiation.

“‘It could be proved to you,’ said Father Alexius, with unusual seriousness.

“Whereupon Father Aylward took down Cardinal Wiseman’s volume on the *Holy Eucharist*, with this simple remark: ‘Here is a book containing the whole subject.’

“I would like it, I said, and I brought it away, with two or three others.

“After this, Father Aylward kindly supplied me with books that were so new and wonderful. How had I lived so long, and known nothing of a religion so adapted to the reason and the heart of us poor mortals? What a new world was opened to me!

“Well, this is enough. You are converts. You



know how I went along, till at length I was received into the church. Friends marvelled at my delusion, prophesying I would be as glad to get out ere two years as I was eager to go in. They were false prophets. I believe more fully to-day than ever that the Church Catholic is the church of the living God. I reverence more fully her teachings and her laws. Constantly I learn something new from her vast storehouse of wisdom and grace. God knew what the human heart needed, and he adapted his religion to meet all its wants. It teaches man truly how to repent of his sins. It forces him from his stronghold of pride, vanity, and self-conceit. It humbles him to the dust, in order that it may elevate him to heaven. It restrains, guides, and encourages. It is the one religion that embraces the whole spirit of Christ's teachings. It is beautiful—divine."

Mrs. Gilfillan did not say this all at once, in a set speech. She was often interrupted by question and remark. This, however, is the substance of her "experience," given nearly as possible in her own words. We were much interested, and enjoyed a pleasant day in her society. To-morrow we are to visit with her the conventual houses of the Good Shepherd and the Sacred Heart. Mrs. McDonald, one of our new Catholic friends, will be our chaperone.

Shall I sleep to-night? Yes; prayer calms all restlessness. And has not "my heart for ever set up its rest in thee, my God"?



XXII.



HAVE taken a first glance at conventual life. It was only a glimpse, but it was like looking into heaven. Not that it is given us while on earth really to look into heaven; but if, when heaven shall be opened to us, all the faculties of the soul, the emotions of the mind, the affection and reverence of the whole spiritual nature, shall be aroused and called into exercise, may not that which produces this effect, though necessarily in an imperfect degree, be like and next to heaven?

It is strange how, when once convinced a thing is right, however open to objection it may have seemed, new light breaks in, new arguments spring up spontaneously, and one is led to wonder why he had been so long blind. Having come to believe fully in the Catholic Church, consequently to disbelieve the calumnies of her enemies, I had come to think that convents might be indeed houses of God, and refuges of rest and quiet for weary souls.

Accustomed, however, by previous habits of thought, to question and doubt all that I did not quite understand, I presumed to think it well enough that, in progress of time, conventual life had, for the most part, gone into disuse. Those levellers of costly structures, massive abbeys, and retired convents might not have been such out-



rageous vandals. Did not the wicked world need all the offices of the good? And, as to the bad should they live in ease and luxury in those grand old castles, embowered in forests of shrubbery and beauty? Since reading Montalembert's *Monks of the West*, a "change has come over the spirit of my dream." Often, in reading these volumes, when I have beheld the spirit of the world clashing with the spirit of the church, ready with his iron heel to trample upon the vine of Christ's planting, ready with ruthless myrmidons to overwhelm the feebler band of the soldiers of the cross, I have wondered why a red sea did not uproll to divide them, or why appeared not from heaven cherubim with flaming sword to cut off the hand of vandalism. Surely, something from on high *has* intervened; otherwise the church, so assaulted as by infernal powers, would not now exist, still less have life so vigorous and glorious.

— I had thought to see in the sisters only ordinary mortals. A little more sedate, stern, old-maidish—with a speaking presence—"holier than thou." Instead, I saw angels—angels in the guise of women. You do not behold such faces in the world. They would harden, grow old, and wear marks of the chafings of the spirit, as do those who have to battle with the storms of life. Like tropic flowers they would lose their bloom in a chillier clime. Their atmosphere of praise and prayer is altogether another from that outside. It is not for one to say through what watchings and prayers



they have attained unto a life so spiritual that it may be read in every lineament of the face. Nor are they ever idle. And what a labor is theirs—a mission like their divine Lord's to call sinners to repentance. Truly, such as these are they of whom it is said: "They shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." The house itself is beautiful, orderly, seemingly without stain even of a particle of dust. How is it possible to keep everything so spotless? Pictures adorn the walls, and passages of Scripture in black letters upon white ground hang here and there. The little chapel is a marvel of grace and purity; it would seem that the Divinity upon the altar has infused holiness into senseless matter.

After taking everything in a bewildered glance, mamma's emotions overpowered her, and she sobbed out her appreciation. To all that was said to her, she could only reply that she had never an idea that there was such a place or such a people upon earth!

"I believe you would like to remain here, mamma," I said.

"Yes; I would like to stay," she replied. "But for you, Myrrha, I would go out no more."

And were it not for Selwyn, I said mentally, here is where I would take up my abode, live and die. For, verily, this is the house of God, and here the very gate to heaven.

I speak of both houses as one—the Good Shepherd—the Sacred Heart. The same spirit



pervaded each—that of purity, sanctity. To mamma and myself it was a first glimpse of conventual life. Was it “fair and comely in appearance, while within full of rottenness and dead men’s bones”? Away with the question! A vicious mind alone could ask it.

Coming out of houses of such peace and quiet yet steady industry, gathering the dust of earth upon my feet, and the spirit of the world upon my mind, my excited thought held an “indignation meeting,” and resolved, that whereas, by all outside of the Catholic Church, conventual life is misrepresented and cruelly maligned, therefore each and every one of the protesting world should be forced at least once in a lifetime to visit a convent, that henceforth ignorance might be no plea, and that upon many a soul a heavenly blessing, un-awares, might fall.



XXIII.



THREE days ago came another letter from Selwyn. Here it is in its completeness :  
“MYRRHA : What need to say ‘Dear Myrrha,’ for the simple sound of your name embodies every term of endearment? Myrrha — richer than gold, more precious than frankincense, sweeter than myrrh. Beautiful is the name, because worn by one who adorns it exceedingly. I would not flatter you ; I am above descending to that folly ; I know you to be above receiving it with pleasure. I speak thus, confident that, in what I am about to say, the noble nature of Myrrha will assert itself, and she will be magnanimously true to the friend of her youth, to her conscience, and her God.

“I will come to the point at once, Myrrha. I ask you to release me from my promise of marriage.

“You may have inferred from my former letters, or, at least, intuitively divined, that since my conversion, almost from the first, I have had aspirations for a higher life. I have combated these with every human weapon, that broke at length in my hand like glass.

“It is due to you, Myrrha, to whom so much of my inner life is known, to acquaint you with the



struggle through which I have passed. It has been a bitter trial to bring myself able to ask the betrothed of my youth to yield up her claim. And even now I do not demand, but simply ask it.

“You prayed that I might have the fulness of the Catholic faith. If God has more than answered your petition, and transferred my devotion to himself, it is because he is wiser than ourselves, and knows better than we what is for our ultimate good and his greater glory. I did not make a leap into this decision—contingent upon your consent—of entering the priesthood, as I seemed to into Catholicity. The thought always occurred to me with this prevision—*were it not for Myrrha*.

“Myrrha! the bright dream of my boyhood, the one love of my life; Myrrha! the name was written in pencil all over my school-books; its mystic letters found form amid the mazes of Legendre and the unknown quantities of Bourdon. The thought of Myrrha was as a refreshing draught after a toilsome translation, as a gleam of light after a labyrinthian thesis. She was the poetry of my existence, the rainbow to scatter every cloud.

“And this, Myrrha, so much a dream, a fancy, a myth, was reality, was my betrothed, was to have been my wife! If I had not Myrrha, I would give myself to God alone. How excellent!—how exalted to live only for God! I looked with wonder upon the priest ministering at the altar. I began to envy him his sacred position so near to the divine Son. And who was this priest? A mortal like



myself. A child in his father's house, he had known the sweets of family ties. He may have had the love of brother and sister; perhaps a love tenderer, as mine for Myrrha.

“‘And he left all and followed him.’

“Left all! If he left only that which scarcely gave him pain to leave, wherein was the self-denial, where the taking up of the cross?

“In my admiration of the new faith, in my enthusiasm and love for the Divine Martyr, I felt a willingness to lay down my life, if need be, for the glorious triumph of Christianity, yet I could not give up Myrrha, who was more and dearer than life. Daily, hourly came the question to my soul, ‘Will you give up all and follow Jesus?’ Invariably the silent answer of my heart was, ‘All—all but Myrrha.’

“Had I great possessions? I would give them up. Should I be for ever an exile from the land of my birth, from my parents and sisters? I could bear it without a murmur. But this other sacrifice, it was more than losing an eye—more costly than cutting off the right hand.

“Was I, then, unworthy the kingdom of God? God did not require such sacrifices, I reasoned. There were enough to do his work; the world was full of laborers. I was but one; how little could *my* single hand and heart do for God!

“In vain I reasoned, argued, and opposed. Back came the solemn words, ‘Unless you take up your cross, and follow me, ye cannot be my disciple.’



“Why do I thus weary you by a recapitulation of my struggles and contests? At length, I sought counsel from my friend and spiritual father, the Jesuit missionary. I unfolded to him the whole story. He listened attentively, and when at the close I said, ‘You know all now, father, I place the matter in your hands, and will abide by your decision,’ I experienced a sort of relief, having thrown off the responsibility upon one more experienced and more used to burdens.

“This, however, was of short duration, for, much to my surprise, he thus replied: ‘As to your receiving holy orders, I cannot decide for you, my son. This is a matter between you and your God. To him must you answer for your decision. If he has called you to the holy vocation of the priesthood, he will give you strength to renounce the dearest earthly ties. As yet, however, you are not at liberty to make, even yourself, a final decision. You are under vows of solemn betrothal. The church regards betrothal as but one step from marriage; neither party can alone dissolve the contract. You cannot solemnly devote yourself to the service of God in the sacrament of holy order, while already under vows unfulfilled or uncanceled. Your proper way is to write to your betrothed, stating your aspirations for a higher life, and asking her free consent to the annulment of your marriage contract.’

“‘But I do not wish to do this, until fully decided as to my future life,’ I replied, disappointed. ‘I do



not wish to be released from engagement to Myrrha, until I know God wills me to become a priest.'

" 'By this may you know, my son, his will concerning thee: when, freely, of your own accord, you place your hand upon your mouth, and your mouth in the dust, and cry, "Here am I, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" then will your ear be opened that you can hear his heavenly answer. But first should you be in readiness to act upon it, by being disengaged from the object of your affection.'

" 'I am confident, father,' I said, 'that I have but to write to Myrrha upon the subject, and she will release me without a word of dissent.'

" 'Possibly,' he returned. 'But there is an injustice in taking many months for your own consideration, and expecting a decision from her in as many minutes. Give her the same length of time as you have taken, or may still require. Would you be unjust because you count upon her magnanimity?'

" 'I think, however, my chief trouble is in giving her up,' I responded mournfully.

" ' "You will read in Thomas à Kempis,' replied this good Jesuit father:

" ' "We must leave what is beloved, for the sake of the Beloved.

" ' "Sooner or later thou must be separated from all, whether thou wilt or no.

" ' "The nature of thy Beloved is such that he will not admit of a rival; but he will have thy heart for himself alone, and sit as king upon his own throne."



“‘Spend a few more days in thought, then come back to me.’

“Left to myself, I more than once thought I had decided to cling to my idol. Had not God inspired me with this tender love? Why should I be called upon to renounce it, while all the world clasped it so closely? It was of no use, I was not my own master; ‘the Spirit of God was upon me.’

“Several brief notes lie upon my table addressed to you, coldly asking you to release me. They would chill you, as they do even myself, and I cannot send them. No; you must know all, and it is a relief to me thus to unburthen myself. I am coming to the close now.

“Last night I joined in the celebration of the Christmas festival. At the church, in the light, amid the incense and the sweet sounds, I had been uplifted, as it were, unto the ‘seventh heaven.’ I returned to my solitary room, which was in darkness—more deep from the blaze of light I had just left—more silent from the almost unearthly music that had but just entranced me. . . . In the morning I had said, ‘I will live for Myrrha.’ After a season of trial, which only the eye of God may penetrate in the earliest dawn of another morning, my hands, which for hours had been folded in prayer, were uplifted in praise to God who had given me the victory. I cried in exultation, ‘I will live for him, who died for me.’ The sacrifice was accomplished, the conquest was complete; and *my* Myrrha floated away like the vanishing bird, whose



wings are plumed for heaven. I went to early Mass to offer my thanksgiving, and from thence to my dear missionary's room. I was surprised at the fervor of his congratulations.

“‘I did not think,’ I said to him, ‘that you would share so greatly in my joy. On the contrary, I felt almost hurt at the indifference you manifested when I left all to you a few days back.’

“‘And yet afterwards, I reproached myself lest I might have said aught to influence you. Gladly would I have said, “Live, my son, that higher life so beautiful in the sight of heaven; join the army of those who, by grace, have been enabled to trample the world under their feet, and to take hold with their hands on heaven,” but I might not. You will be the more strong and secure for the prolonged struggle. Had another spoken the word for you, you might have hesitated and looked back. . Now, you will go forward resolute and brave, provided always that you become released from your betrothed. For I have already warned you that you are not at liberty even to arrive at an unalterable decision until after hearing from Myrrha.’

“‘I understand that, father; but I know so well what her answer will be that it is all the same as though it were before my eyes. My chief difficulty was to gain my own consent.’

“‘We do not even know ourselves; much less can we count upon knowing the nature of another. Your victory over yourself, however, will, in any case, constitute for you an element of strength. I



am an old man, my son. I have lived many years, yet even to me life appears like a vapor that vanishes away. At most, it is but a shadow of the life which is to come. It is for that future life we are to live and prepare. Therefore it does not become us to gather treasures for this world alone. And, after all, is there no compensation in self-sacrifice? If the object of your regard be removed by death, you submit, but what reward have you? Your submission is not voluntary, but forced, and inevitable. If you give her up voluntarily for the love of God, does not the struggle, the pain, the conquest, but unite you the more intimately to the divine mind? No sacrifice is too great for one we love. If we love our Saviour more than all, we yield all for him. Nor that alone; we rejoice that we can manifest that love by so great a sacrifice. Should it please God that you enter the priesthood, you will come up on the great field, as I am about to leave.'

"'Oh! that your mantle might descend upon me, my father.' And I knelt to him for his blessing.

"I kneel to you also, Myrrha, in spirit, laying this letter before you, with all its incoherences. Forgive me, Myrrha, and—*A Dieu.*

"SELWYN."



XXIV.



AS was usual, mamma read Selwyn's letter after I had finished it.

"Had such a thought occurred to you?" she questioned.

"No; most strange to say, it never had."

"It did to me, though I could not speak of it. And what will you say to him?"

"What will I say but *yes*—thrice *yes*?—and God bless him!" proceeding to my writing-desk.

"You will not write now; be not so precipitate; give yourself time for reflection. Even a few days may make a great revolution in your mind."

"All time could not change me, mamma. To me he is dead and buried, and, rising from his grave, let me say with Eugénie de Guérin, 'Let me throw myself into eternity.' My life—my work, too, shall be for God."

"But, my child, it is so sudden; how can you bear it?"

"Bravely, mamma, as you shall see. God will help me." And a little hymn or anthem which I had learned in my prayer-book, and which I was fond of repeating, came into my mind, and I repeated it at this time with more earnestness than before:



“ O Sanctissima, O purissima,  
Dulcis Virgo Maria !  
Mater amata, intemerata,  
Ora, ora pro nobis.

“ Tota pulchra es, O Maria !  
Et macula non est in te.  
Mater amata, intemerata,  
Ora, ora pro nobis.

“ Sicut lilium inter spinas  
Sic Maria inter filias.  
Mater amata, intemerata,  
Ora, ora pro nobis.”

I felt suddenly thrown into communion with our Holy Mother, and with all the saints that have ever suffered. I felt a blissful certainty that it was given unto the very angels to hear, and to respond to my fervent *Ora, ora pro nobis*.

“ I will write my letter now, mamma, but to please you I will not send it for at least a day or two.”

“ In so important a step, Myrrha, upon which your whole future depends, I think you should consult Father Burke.”

“ Yes, dear mamma, I will, after I have written my letter. I am quite confident he will say I am right; but it will be some comfort to hear him say so.” Then I commenced :

“ DEAR SELWYN: Three days ago I knelt in the little chapel at the convent of the Sacred Heart. Meditating and praying before the altar, whereon our Blessed Lord is perpetually worshipped, the question came from my lips, ‘ What can I do for thee, my Lord and my God? How can I show



my gratitude—my love for the gift of this precious faith? What can I give up, what do, for thy dear sake, who suffered on the cross for me?’

“I dared not think he had an answer in store for me. But he had, and I heard and recognized it while reading your letter. It is not you alone who has demanded that I withdraw my heart from its earthly love; God our Father has spoken unto you, and, through you, unto me also.

“I will not falter, Selwyn, nor will I fail. And I pray God, henceforth my only Beloved, that, in this act of self-sacrifice, there be no taint of vain-glory. This moment, I rejoice to renounce you for God. This moment, when, by your own self-conquest, you have become more worthy of woman’s love, when you have exalted yourself, as it were, for hero-worship, I freely give you back your freedom, that you may be bound with the glorious fetters of servitude to our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“You have a noble object in view, a grand end to attain. That alone is sufficient to sustain your courage, to incite your ambition, to employ all your energies. You behold before you an exaltation to a dignity beyond that of kings and princes, even that of the priesthood! What am I, frail girl, that I should stand in your way?

“And is there naught for me to do? Hath not Christ left *the poor* a legacy unto his church? Are there not hungry mouths ever to be fed, and shivering forms to be clothed? Are not the sick suffer-



ing ever pains that may be alleviated? and are not mourners everywhere to be comforted? I may alter the saying of the saint, and *work for eternity, by throwing myself into work.*

“ I shall not forget you, Selwyn. God will not require that I drop you out of my prayers. Fifty years hence, more or less, we shall meet before the throne of God, and shall behold each other face to face. As we shall regard each other then in that purer existence, so will I strive to think of you until the angel of death shuts for me the door of this life and opens the gate to the other. Let your conscience never reprove you for aught between you and me. Suffer no fears lest it be not well with me. It shall be well. God helping me, I will be cheerful and happy. He has taken you from me, and taken but his own; for you were his. and not mine. Till we meet in heaven, Selwyn, Farewell.”



XXV.



UNCLE ABNER, after several weeks' delicate silence concerning Selwyn Everett's course of action, which, however, he had discoursed upon at length with mamma, said to me :

"So, Myrrha, it is all over between you and Selwyn. I am sorry—from the bottom of my heart I am sorry."

"You have no reason to regret it, uncle."

"But I do, and shall till the last day of my life. Why, you two seemed made for each other. I prophesied that match when you were little things, and so did everybody else."

"Then you as well as everybody proved false prophets."

"I suppose so, the way things look now. Who would have thought it? For him to turn priest, and you, nun! Wide apart as the poles. I object. I do really, decidedly object. I am almost tempted to rebel against the church for allowing it. If a man or woman happens to be particularly good or sensible, why, they are too good—too precious to marry, and—and—"

"Are doomed 'to waste their sweetness on the desert air,' is that it?"

"Yes, exactly; while the tolerably good, the indifferent, and the worthless make mischief with



domestic affairs generally, and create such tempests, and cut up such fearful didoes, as must scare Prince Nick himself. I've been thinking it over. Good people ought to marry, and bad people are the ones who should be shut up behind iron grates, and made to say prayers whether they will or no. That is a way to bring around the millennium."

I smiled. "Perhaps you had better speak to Father Burke upon the subject. I am inclined to think the church never took quite that view of it."

"Don't trouble the child, Abner. It is wicked to discourage her, when she has proved herself more brave than all the rest of us. And as to mending matters in the church, I expect the church that has stood so many hundred years, without advice from such poor old people as we are, will still get along all right. We must think so, and trust her, and have faith in her, although it *has* been so hard for our poor little Myrrha."

I could not endure this pity, ill-deserved. "O uncle and aunt! you are mistaken about me. I am not poor little Myrrha. I am your happy, contented little Myrrha; always remember that."

They regarded me sadly, with mournful eyes. We were upon different standpoints; their plane was not the same with mine.

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"I did not know," writes Selwyn, in a brief last letter—"I did not know fully the heart of Myrrha, until your letter of renunciation and God-speed revealed it to me. Heaven alone is worthy of it.



. . . I have said, now I have begun. Verily, this is the change of the right hand of the Most High.

“ You recollect the anecdote of the artist who, in looking at the work of a master-hand, said, with a kindling of pride : ‘ I, too, am a painter ! ’ Thus, when I contemplate the grand old church, stately and splendid in her material beauty, and still more royal and magnificent in her spiritual supremacy ; when I observe her monuments of antiquity, her towering temples, her sacred shrines ; when the great names of her saints and martyrs and giant minds command my love and reverence, the sentiment of the painter comes up involuntarily, and I exclaim, with a glow of enthusiasm and rejoicingly : ‘ I, too, am a Catholic ! ’

“ That I am a Catholic, I owe under God to you, Myrrha. Though you were working unwittingly for him, let this great work you have wrought still further animate you. Though we work far apart, who had hoped our paths in life should be as one, let us work with courage and will, crushing out every sorrow and regret, remembering that the trials and crosses of this life shall bring for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

“ Farewell, Myrrha ! I am not so brave and strong as you. Though I may remember you in the distant years for prayer and praise, I must endeavor to forget you now.

“ May the Almighty God, loving Father of us all, have you ever in his holy keeping ; comforting you in life, sustaining you in death, giving you a



joyful entrance into the kingdom of rest. Farewell, Myrrha, and again farewell!

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One further brief note from my journal, and I have done.

— Spring has come again with her softness, freshness, her tender life. Her delicate flowers seem more beautiful than before, and a grace enwraps her invisible to my former vision. I love, more than heretofore, this beautiful spring. Is it because it is under her reign that I am to bid adieu to the world, to enter upon a life that shall bring me nearer to the source of all life, freshness, and beauty? After a few days, mamma and I are to enter the “Convent of the Sacred Heart”; she as a boarder, I as a novice.

I look forward to my future, not with anything of tumultuous hope, or aught of my old idle dreaming, but with a spirit of complete submission to the divine will. Nay, I can truly say, I thank God all things have been with me as they have, for all has been guided by the infinitely wise mind which directs for our good, if we but accept all with patience.

I can truly say with A Kempis:

“Let me always will or not will the same with thee; and let me not be able to will or not to will otherwise than as thou willest or willest not.

“Grant unto me, above all things to be desired, that I may rest in thee, and that my heart may be at peace in thee.



“Thou art the true peace of the heart; thou art its only rest.

“In this peace, in the self-same, that is, in thee, the one sovereign eternal Good, I will sleep and take my rest.”



























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